<u>VALUES</u>

(Book of Ethics)



SWAMI GURUPARANANDA

CONTENTS

FOREWORD

'A value is a value only when the value of the value is valued by you' – says Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswati. All human beings have the knowledge of values. By observing our conscience and by applying common sense, we can easily come up with a list of values. Hence, our problem is not the ignorance of values. Our problem is the ignorance of the value of values. As long as this ignorance continues, values will be in books only. And this ignorance will go only by an educational programme. A society exposed to value-education is an enlightened society. Such a society is a self-regulated, spontaneously dharmic society. The values followed by such a society serve as lubricants which will make all transactions friction-free. Such a society can enjoy peace, prosperity and happiness.

This write-up, authored by Swami Guruparananda, is an attempt in creating an awareness regarding the value of some of the important values. I congratulate Swami Guruparananda for bringing out this learning material which will be useful for all people.

May more and more people benefit from going through this!

With Narayanasmritis,

Swami Paramarthananda.

INVOCATION

शशिना च निशा निशया च शशिः
शशिना निशया च विभाति नभः।
पयसा कमलं कमलेन पयः
पयसा कमलेन विभाति सरः॥

SASINAA CHA NISAA NISAYAA CHA SASIHI
SASINAA NISAYAA CHA VIBHAATHI NABHAHA 1
PAYASAA KAMALAM KAMALENA PAYAHA
PAYASAA KAMALENA VIBHAATHI SARAHA ll

Moon beautifies the night, night beautifies the moon. By both the moon and the night, the sky is beautified. Water beautifies the lotus. Lotus beautifies the water. And together, water and the lotus beautify the lake.

The meaning of this 'sloka' is :

The presence of the moon makes the night look beautiful. And the night highlights the beauty of the moon. Moon and night beautify the sky. The presence of water makes the lotus look beautiful. And it is the lotus which highlights the beauty of the water. Both the lotus and the water beautify the lake.

In a similar manner :

May the 'Guru' (Preceptor) 'beautify' the 'Sishya' (Disciple)! May the 'Sishya' beautify the 'Guru'. By the efforts of the 'Guru' and the 'Sishya', may a good Society evolve!

Swami Guruparananda

PART I

1

BASIC REQUIREMENTS

It is good to think well and
It is divine to act well

Good thoughts and good actions make our life purposeful and blissful. Evil thoughts and wrong actions result in sorrow to us and to the world. Thereby our prime responsibilities are,

1. Right thinking, and
2. Right action.

The primary and ultimate goal of our life is to give benefit and happiness to us and to the world. This we do by removing our ignorance, thereby pursuing right thoughts; and by removing our lack of ability, thereby pursuing right actions.

Knowledge and Ability

For all the sorrow that is experienced in our mind, there might appear to be several types of reasons. Never the less, the true, basic reasons are just two, for all types of sorrow. They are,

1. Ignorance
2. Lack of Ability

It will not be clear from a superficial scrutiny that our ignorance and lack of strength are the reasons responsible for all sorrows that our mind experiences. It may appear that there are several reasons such as financial conditions, the manner in which others treat us, failures, and so on. It is alright if these appear to be the reasons, initially. In a sense, these are also responsible. However, if we investigate a little we will realise that the true reasons are ignorance and lack of strength.

Ignorance

This world gives us different types of experiences. People interact with us in different manners. Each individual treats us in a unique manner. The manner in which some people treat us and interact with us gives happiness. And the manner in which some others treat us and interact with us results in sorrow. The manner in which these people treat us, what they speak about us, and what they think about us may indeed appear to be reasons for our sorrow. But in reality, it is our own mind, which gives reality to these, which is the cause for our happiness as well as for our sorrow. The speech and act of no one can hurt us.

It is the mind, that gives them reality and value, which wounds us.

It is not an incident that gives happiness or sorrow. It is the interpretation of the incident that gives happiness or sorrow.

If we interpret the incidents that we come across with the right knowledge, they do not affect us.

Sri Rama faced the situation of having to go to the forest. This incident resulted in the death of Dasaratha; Lakshmana was overpowered by anger; Kausalya felt sorrow; Kaikeyi felt pleased, and Bharata, mindful of his mother’s evil action, felt guilt feeling mixed with sorrow. But, Sri Rama faced the situation with equanimity. The situation is the same, but it resulted in happiness or sorrow corresponding to the state each individual’s mind. It is clear from this that the true reason for happiness or sorrow is indeed the mind, which gives reality and value to our experiences.

This is the episode of a student who was learning ‘Vedanta’ from a ‘Guru’. He prayed thus to his teacher, “Sir, whenever you go to the houses of your disciples for Bhiksha (food), you are also taking me with you. One of them wishes to give food to you, but wants to avoid me. Therefore, I do not wish to come to his house, please permit me”. The Guru responded, “Indeed you must come with me to that house, in particular. Then alone will your mind get refined. You must learn to take their disrespectful behaviour as the manifestation of a mind that is affected by disease. And you must learn the practice of forgiving them.” Subsequent to this advice, the situation continued to remain the same. But, the disciple’s mind fully accepted the disrespectful behaviour of that host.

The situation had not changed. But, the mind that deals with it had changed. As a result, a sorrowful situation has become a pleasant one. Thus, we cannot

categorise any incident to be either a happy one or a sorrowful one. On the basis of how our mind takes that incident, the incident gives us either pleasurable or sorrowful feelings.

If we employ right knowledge and properly interpret, there are no sorrowful situations at all for us. What we have to understand from this is that we need the right knowledge.

We need right knowledge in order to have right interpretation.

Thereby, our first requirement is to acquire right knowledge. The first step then, is to recognise our ignorance and to aspire to acquire the right knowledge to remove that ignorance.

Lack of Ability

At times, despite our having the awareness as to how to interpret the situations, we are unable to function accordingly. We do have the knowledge that we should not give importance to others' words and that we should not subject ourselves to sorrow. Yet, we feel sorrow due to others' speech. In this case, lack of ability is the reason for our sorrow, even though we have the knowledge.

Lack of ability is the absence of the ability to function, despite having the knowledge. For example, we have the knowledge that drinking liquor, smoking, getting angry, etc., are wrong and that we should

avoid them. Yet, due to lack of strength, we commit those mistakes and suffer.

With right knowledge we also need strength.

All the austerities that we undertake should give us the right knowledge at first, and in the mind that has acquired such knowledge they should give us the ability to implement that knowledge. All the 'Sadhanas' (practices) that we undertake can be categorised under the following two heads.

1. **Practices undertaken to remove ignorance and acquire the right knowledge.**
2. **Practices undertaken to acquire the ability or strength to use such knowledge.**

To acquire knowledge one must utilise the appropriate knowledge-giving instrument, for no knowledge will manifest by itself. So also, the acquired knowledge will not disappear by itself. At first, one must recognise the important role that knowledge plays in our lives. Then, we must become aware of the presence of ignorance that is in our mind. By recognising the importance of knowledge and by becoming aware of the ignorance in our mind, we get a keen desire to acquire the knowledge. Through proper utilisation of the knowledge-giving instrument, we acquire knowledge.

Next, all the austerities that we pursue are to acquire the ability and strength to use the knowledge.

We must pursue such practices that are necessary to strengthen our body and our mind, and acquire that ability and strength.

When we live in this world with the right knowledge and the ability to function with that knowledge, we would be realizing the meaning of what poet Subramania Bharati sang, **"O God! What a spectrum of happiness You have made available for us! ".**

2

HUMAN GOAL

Human goal ('Purushaartha') is the first topic that is studied in Philosophy. The word 'Purusha' denotes man and 'artha' denotes goal. Thereby, the word 'Purushaartha' refers to the goal that a person intends to attain.

Some of the philosophical questions that arise in human mind about life are –

"What is the purpose of life?";
"Why are we living?";
"What are the goals that one should reach?";
"What is the way to reach the goal", and so on.

'Sastra' categorises all the goals that we could attain in life under four heads.

In Sanskrit, these are referred to as 'Dharma-Artha-Kama-Moksha'. Whatever we may acquire in our life will come under these four heads.

1. 'Dharma' (Righteousness),
2. 'Artha' (Wealth),
3. 'Kama' (Pleasure), and
4. 'Moksha' (Liberation)

We will explore these four goals in a slightly different sequence as follows.

1. 'Artha' (Wealth)

Wealth is the first goal that a person aspires to attain. All such items that are essential for a person's life are referred to as 'Artha' or wealth. The first aim of man is to live. It is only after this that he gets the desire about how to live. The basic necessities of life such as food, shelter, clothing, education, and knowledge are termed wealth. And man seeks only these to begin with.

2. 'Kama' (Pleasure)

Upon acquiring the necessities of life, man seeks objects that give him pleasure or happiness. The term 'Kama' therefore refers to all such items that are sought to secure happiness. Thus, the first goal of man is to acquire the necessities of life and the second goal, is to seek objects that give pleasure or happiness. Based on the purpose for which they are used, all the objects that we acquire can be categorized under the first or the second goal of human life. Food that is sought to appease hunger comes under the first goal, while food that is sought for the taste comes under the second goal.

Human mind experiences need or sense of lack in two states. In the first state, man needs the necessities of life for fulfillment. To the sense of lack that appears in the second state, he seeks pleasure giving

objects.

Man's innate instinct is to live. As a result of this instinct, mind feels a certain lack of security. Due to this lack of security, a sense of incompleteness is felt. It is for the removal this lack of fulfillment that man seeks the objects necessary for living.

Upon acquiring the necessities of life, man feels the second type of sense of lack. In this state, he feels an insatiable desire to give pleasure to his senses and mind. To remove this sense of lack of fulfillment that has appeared due to the desire seeking pleasure, man seeks objects that could give him pleasure.

In this world, most of mankind has only these two goals namely wealth and pleasure. Such persons are traveling from one sense of lack to another. Every desire that appears in the mind is the manifestation this lack of fulfillment. They satisfy one desire, then they fall prey to another and they satisfy it, and their life thus goes on without a stop.

3. 'Moksha' –Liberation

Some people seek 'Moksha' (Liberation), which is a goal that is different form the above two. Such people have realised that truth that all the objects that the world gives do not have the ability to give the sense of fulfillment to the mind. Indeed, only such persons who have understood thus, aspire to attain the goal of Liberation.

Here the word 'Moksha' (Liberation) does not imply going to any higher 'Loka' (worlds) such as

'Swarga' (heaven). 'Moksha' indicates the mental peace and fullness that we could attain even as we are living in this world. In all the situations that could give either happiness or sorrow to the body, the sense of fullness that is present in the mind, unaffected by those situations is 'Moksha'. It is not any physical freedom from pain, disease etc., that afflict the body. So long as there is a body, the body will continue to experience dualities such as cold-heat. But 'Moksha' is the freedom that one gets from the sorrows such as jealousy, fear, hatred, etc., which afflict the mind.

Thus 'Moksha' is neither acquiring an object nor attaining a location. On the other hand, 'Moksha' is attaining a contented and fulfilled mind. This 'Moksha' is attained through Self-knowledge. Gaining of Self -nowledge removes from the mind sorrow yielding emotions such as fear, anger, jealousy, attachment, and hatred. Self-knowledge is to realise, seriatim, that the world is impermanent; that God alone is permanent; that the word 'I' does not truly refer to this decadent body-mind-intellect (B-M-I) complex; and that in essence, the true meaning of the word 'I' is God.

4. 'Dharma' – Righteousness

'Dharma' is the general instrument for the above three goals. In this context, the meaning of 'Dharma' is the 'Punya' (unseen merit) that accrues due to the good deeds performed by man.

One has to perform actions to attain the goals of wealth, pleasure and 'Moksha'. When such actions are

in accordance with ethics, the results that accrue are termed ‘Dharma’.

There is a proverb that states

'None can succeed without due effort'

To attain any goal one must undertake the appropriate effort. Effort is the action that we embark. It is a natural law that any action that originates from us will give us the result. And the result will be corresponding to our action. If our action conforms to ethics, such action will result in **‘Punya’** (merit). If our action is contrary to ethics, such action will result in **‘Papa’** (demerit). ‘Punya’ is comparable to currency. A person works in an office for a month and gets his salary in the form of money. He can use this money in three ways.

1. He can buy the items that are essential for his daily life.
2. He can use the money to buy objects that give him pleasure.
3. He can utilize the money towards good deeds such as charity, which purify his mind.

In the same manner, ‘Dharma’ or ‘Punya’ will help us to get the objects that are essential for our life; it will give the objects that are required for us to live happily, and it will also give the qualifications for us to attain the goal of ‘Moksha’.

'Punya' is the invisible result that accrues when we act as per ethics. It is the instrument that gives us the three goals of life, namely, 'Artha' (necessities of life), 'Kama' (Pleasure), and 'Moksha' (Liberation). This 'Punya' is the result of action that is in consonance with ethics. Therefore, it is imperative that our life must be in accordance with ethics.

If one violates ethics, the result of such actions will be 'Papa' (de-merit). 'Papa' is also an invisible result. In addition to giving us sorrow, 'Papa' makes one unfit for the goal of 'Moksha'.

Important effect of 'Punya'

'Punya' is the consequence of our good deeds. This 'Punya' gives us the objects that we are necessary for our life, and for our happiness. However, the most important effect of 'Punya' is to give us the qualification for 'Moksha'.

For the goal of 'Moksha', the first qualification is the ability to discriminate between "that which is permanent and that which is impermanent". This knowledge is termed **'Nithya-Anithya Viveka'** or just **'Viveka'** (Discrimination). Following this 'Viveka', **'Vairagya'** (Dispassion) to the impermanent; and **'Mumukshutwa'** (desire for 'Moksha', to seek the permanent) must develop in the mind. 'Viveka', 'Vairagya', desire to seek the 'Moksha', and other good values are the direct results of 'Punya'. These are the important benefits of 'Punya'. Further it is only due to 'Punya' that one attains Self-knowledge that is the

direct instrument for ‘Moksha’; the right ‘Sastra’ to give that knowledge, and the Guru to teach that ‘Sastra’.

If one were to live his life in a joyous manner, he has to follow ‘Dharma’. ‘Dharma’ is the instrument for a ‘Jiva’ (person), to live this life and for the next life that he is going to face. Indeed, it is due to the result of the ‘Dharma’ that we have done in our previous life, that we have received so many favourable things in this life, without effort. And ‘Dharma’ is the basis for the quality of life that we are going to experience further in this life. Thereby, for whatever a person may desire to attain, the actions for attaining that goal have to be on the basis of Ethics.

Thus, ‘Sastra’ lucidly explains the four types of goals of life and the appropriate ‘Sadhanas’ (practices) for them.

3

PSYCHOLOGY

We can function and lead a normal life only when we have a healthy body. Thereby, in order to protect our body and to keep it in good health and fitness, it is necessary for us to have basic knowledge about what is good for the body and what is not.

If our body gets a disease we have to go to a physician and seek treatment. We would not normally be having sufficient knowledge to treat ourselves. Also, it is not necessary for us to have such knowledge. Only a person who has studied medicine will have the knowledge about the diseases that afflict the body and about the treatment to be given. It is enough for us to have some basic knowledge about how to protect our body.

The same rule applies to the mind as well.

For our normal, daily life to progress, the proper functioning of the mind is quite important. We can function properly in the society only if the mind has normal behaviour. Therefore, just as we need some basic knowledge about our body, so do we need to have some basic knowledge about the mind.

A mind affected by mental disease loses normal behaviour and manifests abnormal behaviour. People

with such abnormal minds cannot function as normal human beings in the society. The help of psychiatrists is necessary for such people to function normally.

It is necessary for us to understand which behaviour of our mind is normal and which is abnormal.

Definition of Psychology

Psychology is the branch of science that studies the functions of human mind and its expressions like attitudes and behaviour. Behaviour is anything that a person does, which can be observed in some way.

Thoughts and emotions are the causes behind each and every action. It is not possible to know the thoughts and emotions. But by observing the behaviour, the causal thoughts and emotions can be inferred. Therefore, the science of psychology investigates human behaviour and seeks to know the causes.

Studying the behaviour of those affected by mental disease, investigating the emotions that cause such behaviour, the psychiatrist decides the course for the treatment. Mind could be afflicted due to several reasons.

1. Due to faulty development and structure of the brain.

2. Due to chemical imbalance in the body, and more particularly in the brain.

3. Due to improper mental attitude to the incidents that are greatly shocking.

4. Due to the use of psychoactive substances that affect the mind (psychoactive substance abuse).

An affected mind will lose its ability to function properly. Philosophy will not be useful for such persons. Their mind must be brought to the normal state, to begin with.

We do not need to have the knowledge about the mind to the extent of being able to treat and cure an afflicted mind. Only a psychiatrist who has done the appropriate research will have the knowledge about the diseases that occur in the mind and of the methods of treatment. It is just enough for us to have the basic knowledge about the nature of the mind.

Emotional intelligence

We need to be aware of the types of feelings that are the responsible causes for our behaviour. It is essential for us to have the knowledge about the nature of our emotions. Emotions such as mental hurt, hatred, jealousy, and anger get deeply lodged in our mind and influence our behaviour. Only when we realise this, could we take the right effort to refine ourselves.

Moreover, such basic knowledge about the mind helps us to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the mind.

“What are the weaknesses in my mind?”
“What are the techniques to remove those weaknesses?”
“How could I purify my mind?”
“How could I concentrate my mind?”

Only when we understand such aspects, could we put our mind in order.

As the mind is a very important organ and as our very life depends on the state of our mind, it is essential to regulate our mind.

Regulation of the mind does not imply attaining an extraordinary mind. It only refers to a normal mind with good qualities.

Ethics is related to the good behaviour of our mind. A normal mind is adequate to know ethics and to implement it. Only a person who has a normal mind can function as per ethics. A mentally ill person or a child cannot act as per ethics.

None can say, “I am a very ordinary person, and I will not be able follow ethics”. The study of ethics and its implementation are indeed for the normal persons only.

Only a person endowed with a normal mind can understand the function of the mind, attain knowledge about ethics, follow a life in consonance with it, and elevate himself in life.

Thus, to improve the quality of our life, we need a normal mind to begin with, followed by basic knowledge about the mind, and knowledge about the techniques that could refine our mind.

4

ROLE OF MIND IN HUMAN LIFE

Sastra introduces our mind to us as an inner instrument functioning in the body. It is an instrument similar to the other parts of the body such as hands and legs. Mind is termed 'Antah karanam' (अन्तःकरणं)– 'antah' meaning inner, and 'karana' meaning instrument.

Unlike a pen, which is a life-less instrument that we use to write, mind functions as a sentient instrument.

This world is composed of the five elements ('Pancha Bhutas'), namely, space, air, fire, water and earth, so is our body. This body composed of the five elements is called gross-body ('Sthula Sariram'). The subtle-body ('Sukshma Sariram') is the conglomeration of 'Antah karanam', senses, 'Prana', etc.

The 'Antah karanam' that is generally referred to as the mind is the repository of thoughts. It is the most important part of our subtle body. 'Antah karanam' is of the nature of thoughts. It can be sub-divided as four, depending on the function of the thoughts. They are,

1. Mind ('Manaha'),
2. Intellect ('Buddhi'),
3. Memory ('Chitta'), and

4. Body-identification ('Ahamkara').

'Antah karanam' comprises these four types of thoughts. Often times, we refer to the group of these four types of thoughts also as the mind. Thus, we are using the term 'mind' with two meanings as,

1. 'Antah karanam' – (covering all the four types of thoughts), and
2. 'Antah karanam' - (of the first type alone).

We will now briefly see the individual natures of these four types of thought-flows.

1. Mind ('Manaha') : Emotional thoughts are covered in this category. All emotions are of the form of thoughts only. Love, hatred, anger, peace, fear, kindness, jealousy, happiness, sorrow, and all other emotions manifest in the form of thoughts. This type of stream of emotions is termed as the mind.

2. Intellect ('Buddhi') : Intellect denotes the thoughts that take a decision. These thoughts investigate any aspect in a logical manner and take a decision. Intellect concludes the matter decisively.

3. Memory ('Chittam') : This is an impression of our experiences. All our experiences are recorded as impressions in our 'Antah karanam'. Some impressions are not forgotten ever, whereas some other impressions are lost after a time. But, to remember certain other items, we have to take special effort such as rote. All these impressions are called 'Vasana'.

4. Body-identification ('Ahamkaram') : The thought that identifies the gross-body and the subtle-body as 'I' , is termed 'Ahamkaram'. (In this context, 'Ahamkaram' is not used to refer to ego or arrogance.)

Thus, the instrument that functions with the four types of thoughts is called mind or 'Antah karanam'. Hereafter, we will use this as the meaning of the word 'Antah karanam'.

Let us imagine that God appears before us and gives us an option to choose one among the two boons; either 'a palatial mansion that comes with a sick body', or 'a hut along with a healthy body'. A sane person will certainly opt only for the healthy body though with a hut. Our health is far more valuable than the external objects. Similarly, if we are given an option of a weak mind in a strong body as against a strong mind in a weak body, we will opt for strength of the mind in preference to the strength of the body. We can understand from this that, physical health and more so mental health are far more valuable than all types of wealth.

It is the mind that is responsible for bondage, or for liberation ('Moksha') of man.

The state of our life depends very much on the state of our mind. Indeed, it is our mind which experiences the state called sorrow or 'Samsara' or bondage. And it is our mind which experiences the state that is given different terms such as bliss, 'Moksha', or liberation.

Life is, what mind is.

Now, we will see as to how our mind influences our life.

1. Mind is the abode of two kinds of cognition.

The skin, mouth, eye, nose, and ear are called senses or 'Indriya'. They function as the 'direct instruments for knowledge'. Through the skin or touch, we get the knowledge of cold or heat, softness or hardness. Through the tongue we know the taste, and through the eyes we recognise the shape, colour, etc. For these senses to function as the instruments for knowledge, our mind must function properly. Even if the eyes are open, if the mind is not functioning properly, the eyes will not give the knowledge. For example, when the teacher is lecturing in a classroom, if the mind is not attentive, alert, and is behind the ears, we do not gain knowledge through the ears.

Thus, the mind functions as the basic instrument behind the senses and assists to give the right cognition.

At times, the eyes through which we get right cognition, also give us wrong cognition.

The mind that recognizes, through the eyes, a rope as a rope, sees a snake at times. In the same manner, the mind that gives the right cognition becomes the cause for wrong cognition at times and makes our life sorrowful. The mind that normally

understands the situations and others' speech correctly, understands erroneously at times.

Mind is the seat for both right cognition as well as wrong cognition. Right knowledge results in the progress of our life and wrong cognition becomes the reason for our fall. Mind is the abode for both the types of knowledge.

2. Mind is the abode of emotions

Mind is the abode of the different types of emotions. What is a matter for wonder is that the self same mind is the seat for totally contradictory emotions. Contradictory emotions such as, 'love-hate', 'happiness-sorrow', 'boldness-fear', 'clarity-confusion', 'humility-arrogance', and 'sacrifice-selfishness' are resident in the mind only. These emotions transform to be our character. The qualities in our mind can be divided as of two types,

1. Divine qualities
2. Demonic qualities.

The divine qualities are also called virtues, good (or positive) values. A mind endowed with good qualities becomes a healthy mind. A mind with evil (negative) qualities becomes a sick mind. Thus, depending on the types of qualities that we have cultivated and accumulated in our mind, our mind becomes either a blessing or a curse to us.

3. Mind is the abode of impressions ('Vasana')

Often, our mind lives in the past than in the present times. The reason for this is that, our past experiences are recorded as impressions in the mind. The impressions that are not forgotten are called 'Vasana'. These 'Vasana' are of two types.

1. **'Subha Vasana'** (positive impressions), and
2. **'Asubha Vasana'** (negative impressions)

'Subha Vasanas' (positive impressions) are those that encourage good qualities which will result in the ultimate good. Examples for these are the Impressions about how we experienced affection, how we were forgiven, how we were accepted, etc.

Examples for 'Asubha Vasanas' (negative impressions) are those about how we faced disrespect, sorrow, and failures; injustice done to us; how we were let down, etc. This type of impressions instigates revengeful attitude, anger, jealousy, and other negative qualities, and gives us sorrow.

Past is not past.

The past is continuing in us. We feel sorrow not only because of the happenings in the present times, but due to the happenings in the past as well. Often the mind forgets the happier memories and preserves the sorrowful memories. Indeed, we would have been forgiven on several instances. Forgetting these, the mind records the few instances when we were not

forgiven. It reminds us of this memory and causes sorrow to us. It is the nature of the mind to give life to a past instance and to show what is non-existent as existent.

Experiences continue in the mind as 'Vasana' (impressions). The quality of our life is decided by the type of impressions that instigate our actions. Verily, the nature of 'Vasana' (impressions) that we have earned and which guides us decides the basis of our life.

4. Mind is the 'Kartha' (Doer)

Mind the cause for all the actions that emanate from our body, speech, and mind. Besides functioning as an instrument, the mind is also the cause for all the actions that emanate from us. That is, the mind functions also as the 'Kartha' (doer). The word 'Kartha' (doer) refers to that agency which does the action. Mind, which is an instrument, is also a 'Kartha' (doer).

It is the mind that associates the feeling of 'I' with the gross-body and the subtle-body; it makes them function; and it also claims, 'I have done these tasks'.

Our actions are of two types, namely, good deeds and evil actions. For every action of ours, a corresponding result will accrue. This result of the action is called 'Karma phala'. It is the mind that generates 'Karma phala' (result of action) by performing the action.

The refined mind undertakes good deeds and

generates good ‘Karma phala’. The unrefined mind pursues evil deeds and results in a ‘Karma phala’ that gives us sorrow.

Money and mind are good servants, but dangerous masters.

If our mind is under our control and functions as a good ‘Kartha’ (doer), we attain benefit. Otherwise, our own mind will result in our sorrow.

5. Mind is also the ‘Bhokta’ (Experiencer)

As the ‘Kartha’ (doer), the mind causes our ‘Karma phala’ (result of action). And it is the mind that enjoys that result of action. The word ‘Bhokta’ (enjoyer) refers to him who enjoys the result of the action. Every action that originates from us will result in the corresponding result. And it is the mind that experiences that result, as well.

The result of a good deed is called ‘Punya’ (merit) and the result of an evil action is called ‘Papa’ (demerit). ‘Punya’ gives us a pleasurable experience, while ‘Papa’ gives a sorrowful experience.

Mind experiences both pleasure and sorrow. And it is that very mind that is the cause for both pleasure and sorrow.

It is in the mind, which functions in the above said manner, that both bondage and ‘Moksha’ (liberation) are experienced.

'Yoga'

The text 'Yoga Sutra' composed some 5000 years ago by Maharshi Patanjali, on "how to discipline the body and the mind", is available even today. He had clearly indicated therein that it is enough for one to have a body and a mind that are healthy to face the normal routine life; that by special meditation practices the mind can acquire 'Siddhis'; and that such 'Siddhis' are indeed hurdles for the goal of 'Moksha' (liberation). 'Siddhis' are supernatural powers that could be acquired by the mind. Though powers such as 'knowing the past', and 'walking over water' could be acquired, by such 'Siddhis' one cannot get 'Moksha' or a contented mind. Therefore, our goal here is get the basic knowledge about our mind and to convert it to be a proper instrument for our life.

'Bandha' and 'Moksha' (Bondage and Liberation)

'Bandha' (Bondage) is the sense of incompleteness in the mind due to ignorance and erroneous knowledge.

'Moksha' (Liberation) is the sense of fullness that is experienced in the mind due to true knowledge about the Ultimate.

We do not attempt to destroy our head, just because we suffer head-ache. In the same manner, if we experience sorrow due to our mind, we should not attempt to destroy it. Our aim is not the destruction of

the mind. Mind is an essential instrument for us. And it is with the mind alone that we can attain our goal.

We are bound because of our mind. It is with the same mind that we could get liberation. It is the mind alone that experiences both bondage and liberation. Just as we get bound, in the same manner, we should get liberated.

In an 'Asrama'(hermitage), it was the practice to tie the cow to a post in the cattle shed in the evening. As the rope was misplaced, the disciple asked the Guru what he should do. The Guru advised the disciple to take the cow to the shed and to play-act as if he was tying it to the post. The student followed the Guru's instructions. And thinking that it was bound, the cow also settled itself down for the night. The next morning the cow would not get up even when it was prodded by the disciple to get up. The disciple went to the Guru and reported the matter. The Guru advised the disciple, "the cow thinks that it is bound, and that you have to untie it. You go and play-act as if you are untying the rope". The disciple went to the cattle shed and play acted as if he was untying the rope. The cow got up and was ready to go for grazing! In this episode, the cow was 'bound' because of its thought that it was bound. Its 'freedom' also came with its own thought that it has been released. Our condition is very similar to this. We are 'bound' because of our mind. So, we have to get liberated by our mind only.

Thus, our mind plays an important part in our life. It is our prime duty to us, to acquire the right knowledge in our mind, to acquire the ability to implement that

knowledge, and to undertake the 'Sadhanas' (practices) for acquiring them.

5

PHILOSOPHY

The word Philosophy means love of knowledge. When we have love for an object, that love itself will propel us to engage in the appropriate task to attain that object. All the wishes in our mind do not culminate in action. Only such desires that are intense culminate in action. When the love of knowledge intensifies, one engages himself in an action to acquire that knowledge. Thereby, the word Philosophy also means the pursuit of knowledge.

Further, the research undertaken to acquire the knowledge also becomes the meaning of the word Philosophy. Thus, for the word Philosophy, there are three meanings, namely,

1. Love of knowledge
2. Pursuit of knowledge, and
3. Research for knowledge

In worldly practice, if one does extensive research in any field and acquires a rare knowledge, he is awarded the Ph.D., the degree – Doctor of Philosophy, in that subject. The word Philosophy is employed, in this instance, to refer to the extensive research undertaken by him in that field. But in our context, Philosophy means a separate branch of knowledge.

Definition of Philosophy

> **Philosophy is defined as the rational and critical enquiry into basic principles.**

The word Philosophy is termed ‘Tatwa’ – in Sanskrit. The word ‘Tatwa’ means ‘its true nature’.(‘Tat’ denotes ‘its’, ‘twa’ denotes ‘nature’). For any subject that is taken by us for study, enquiring into its real nature and understanding is the true meaning of the word ‘Tatwa’.

In philosophy, the indestructible and unchanging truth-principle is taken for investigation. Thereby, philosophy is the investigation of the truth-principle. Other matters such as,

- ‘What is the nature of this world that is experienced by us?’;
- ‘From which basic cause was this world created?’;
- ‘What is the relationship between that basic cause, and us, who are experiencing this world?’;
- ‘What is the ultimate goal of human life?’; and
- ‘How can that ultimate goal be attained?’,

are also investigated in philosophy.

Divisions in Philosophy

The topics which are researched in philosophy can be categorised as four, as

1. **Metaphysics (Enquiry of the truth-principle)**
2. **Epistemology (Enquiry about knowledge)**
3. **Ethics**
4. **Aesthetics**

1. Metaphysics : - We observe that all the objects that we enjoy in this world are susceptible to destruction and change. We have never come across any entity that is not subject to change and destruction.

> "Is there an indestructible entity that is the sub-stratum of this destructible body and world?;
> If there is one, what is the true nature of that entity?;
> What is the relationship between such an entity and us?"

Metaphysics is such enquiry to get the knowledge about the indestructible truth-principle.

The investigators of the truth-principle investigate three entities, and profess their own understanding as their philosophies. These three entities are,

1. God ('Iswara'),

2. Living being ('Jiva'), and
3. World ('Jagat')

The root cause this creation is referred to as 'God principle' or 'Parabrahman', which has greatest power and greatest knowledge. The exposition of the nature of 'Parabrahman' is made in Metaphysics. Some investigators say that an indestructible 'Parabrahman' is not required as the substratum for this universe. Their belief is that 'there is none' (-'na asti' in Sanskrit). Hence, they are called atheists ('Nastikas') .

It is a universal law that any change can happen only on a changeless substratum. If a system is functioning in an orderly manner, there should be an intelligent entity which has created it and is managing it. Seeing from this angle, we find that this transient world is functioning in an orderly manner. Therefore, there must be an unchanging and an indestructible entity as the cause for this world and for the living beings. It is such an entity which is taken for enquiry here.

Three orders of reality

We are investigating the existence of an object here. The existence that we experience in this world is for longer duration than the existence of the objects that we see in our dream. The Ultimate Principle is 'existent' without changing, in all the times. Hence, it is referred to as the 'Paaramaarthika Satyam' – 'Absolute Reality'. The existence of the world is there

for the general transaction of all of us for a specified time period and it is referred to as 'Vyaavahaarika Satyam' – 'Transactional Reality' (or 'Relative Reality'). The objects that appear in our dream are visible only for us and only as long as we see the dream. Hence, the dream is called 'Praatibhaasika Satyam' (or 'Individual Reality'). Thus, investigation of the type of existence is an important part of philosophy.

2. Epistemology (Enquiry about knowledge) :- Any knowledge comes through an instrument of knowledge. Such 'instrument of knowledge' is called 'Pramaanam' – in Sanskrit. Epistemology covers such investigations as – "How many types of 'Pramanam' are available?; How does knowledge happen?; What is the nature of such knowledge?'", etc. The five senses, namely, body (skin), mouth (tongue), eyes, ear, and nose, interface with the world directly, and they give us knowledge by direct experience. Hence, these senses are called 'Pratyaksha Pramana' – direct instruments of knowledge. Similarly, during the day time we notice smoke over a far away hill, and we suspect that there might be a fire there. This expectation is called 'Anumana Pramana'(inference). Thus, investigation about the different instruments of knowledge and the nature of the knowledge are made in Epistemology.

3. Ethics :- Ethics is the text that investigates about 'Good conduct'. Investigating what is right and what is

wrong, it formulates the code of good conduct for us. Ethics is the text that highlights moral behaviour of humans.

We call ethics as 'Dharma Sastra', wherein the study is made of right conduct and positive values.

4. Aesthetics :- The human mind does not get satisfaction with the mere fulfilment of the basic needs such as food, and clothing. The mind that initially searches for food to appease hunger subsequently searches for food for taste. In the same manner, even after fulfilling all the basic needs, the mind experiences a sense of lack of completeness. If the basic needs alone were to give sense of fulfillment to the mind, those who are in the prison must experience it! Propelled by the desire to experience happiness, the mind seeks aesthetics. Aesthetics is the feeling of experiencing beauty. Aesthetics has resulted in the creation of different types of arts. Arts such as painting, music, dance, and poetry may not be required to meet the physical needs of man, but they are required to meet his psychological needs. As arts satisfy the need of human mind, aesthetics is considered as a topic in philosophy.

Though investigations are undertaken under these four topics in philosophy, the first theme, Metaphysics, that investigates the Truth-principle, occupies an important position.

6

'VEDA'

'Veda' is a treasure house of knowledge. It is an instrument of knowledge. Such an instrument of knowledge is called 'Pramana'. Veda has come through the tradition of the student ('Sishya') learning by listening to the teacher ('Guru'). Hence, Veda is called 'Sabda pramana' (sound based instrument of knowledge). Our eyes function as instruments to show the colour of an object. In the same manner, the 'Veda' functions as an instrument of knowledge.

Whenever an equipment is purchased a 'User's Manual' is given, to explain the proper use of that item. Similarly God, the Creator of this world, has given us the knowledge as to how the world should be utilised. 'Veda' is the manual that contains such a knowledge.

We could get knowledge from the words of others. Such words become the instrument of knowledge or 'Sabda pramana'. But if we have no faith in those words, even if those words were true, they will not give us knowledge. Thereby, having 'Sraddha' (or faith) in 'Sabda pramana' is very important.

With a view to instill faith in Veda as the 'Sabda

pramana', the traditionalists state that 'Veda' was given by God himself. They state that God, the Creator of the world, himself manifested the 'Veda' through the pure minds of 'Rishis' (sages).

Some researchers attempt to find the time of appearance of 'Veda' using some techniques and indicate possible dates. But, those who are more interested in benefiting from the knowledge of 'Veda', do not attach much importance to these date calculations.

Veda is Universal Knowledge

'Veda' is a text of knowledge given to mankind. It is not formulated for people of a specific group or religion. Today, people of all religions accept and utilize codes of ethics such as 'Tirukkural'. In the same manner, 'Veda' was used in earlier times as a general guide by different schools of thought such as 'Saiva', 'Vaishnava', and others. In current times, 'Veda' has come to be regarded to be a text for the 'Hindus'. However, in reality, 'Veda' is above caste and religion and is a text for the progress of all of humanity. The two core themes in 'Veda' are Ethics and the investigation of the Ultimate Principle. And these two themes are applicable for all mankind. The sincere interest of a person is in itself sufficient qualification, for the study of 'Veda' and to follow the Vedic path. Through the following story, Veda itself confirms that there is no other condition.

A boy named 'Satyakama' goes to a 'Gurukula' (traditional school), desiring to study Vedas. To the Guru's query about his parents, Satyakama truthfully states the fact that his mother did not know the lineage of his father. Considering the truthfulness of the boy as sufficient qualification, the 'Guru' accepts him as a student and teaches him 'Veda'.

We see some parents who desire the progress of their children, but themselves become the obstacles for the development of their children. They have great affection for their children, but they lack knowledge necessary for nurturing the growth of their children. In the same manner, many who have great faith in 'Vedas' and seek their glory, do not understand the essence of 'Vedas'. They have become obstacles for the growth and glory of the 'Vedas'.

We can observe in the society that there are many Vedic scholars who do not accept the view that 'Vedas' can be studied and Vedic mantras can be recited, irrespective of the gender, caste or religion. Only mature people can accept truth as truth. Often we see that true concepts are not accepted in the society. We can see that over many generations false doctrines are perpetrated. Many Vedic pundits subject 'Vedas' to limitations such as caste and religion. This results in a situation where 'Vedas' cease to be of use to humanity. There is an adage that "the wealth that

you hide from others could cease to be of use even for you".

Though the great treasure of 'Vedas' is available with us, the reason why it is not more widely useful to humanity is because we have not understood their inner meaning. None has a right to tell another that they do not have the right to study 'Vedas'. But, many laymen mistakenly think that they are not qualified to study and benefit from the 'Vedas'. Just as there are some beliefs that yield good in vogue in the society, there are also other beliefs in vogue that give negative results.

Thus, we must understand that 'Veda' is a universal text, not subject to the caste and religion.

Knowledge given by 'Veda'

'Veda' gives us the knowledge about the goals of human life. It also gives us the knowledge about the 'Sadhanas' (practices) that should be undertaken to attain those goals. 'Veda' expounds the knowledge about two themes.

1. 'Dharma' (Righteous conduct),
2. 'Para Brahman' (Ultimate Reality or God)

'Dharma' relates to righteous human behaviour, and is the ethics. Under the topic of 'Dharma', topics such as good conduct, good character, and proper

attitude are discussed.

The word ‘Para Brahman’ means that entity which is supreme and ever-present. ‘Veda’ expounds the knowledge about ‘Para Brahman’, which is the indestructible substratum for this destructible and transient world.

‘Veda’ is divided into four parts as ‘Rig Veda’, ‘Sama Veda’, ‘Yajur Veda’ and ‘Atharvana Veda’. All these four Vedas expound only the above mentioned twin core themes, namely, ‘Dharma’ and ‘Para Brahman’. Based on these two themes, all the Vedas are divided into two sections, as ‘Karma Kanda’, and ‘Jnana Kanda’. In general, ‘Karma Kanda’ forms the first part of the ‘Veda’ and ‘Jnana Kanda’ occurs in the later part.

Karma Kanda

The subjects covered in ‘Karma Kanda’ section of Veda are the discussions of what is ‘Dharma’ and what is ‘Adharma’ ; the invisible merit called ‘Punya’ that accrues due to the pursuit of ‘Dharma’ ; and the invisible demerit called ‘Papa’ that results due to the pursuit of ‘Adharma’. Further for acquiring ‘Punya’, different methods of worship of the divine such as ‘Yaga’, and service to the society are described.

The main purpose of 'Karma Kanda' is to give the knowledge of ethics and to put men on the right path. By following the right path, the result of 'Punya' is obtained. It is the wealth that we acquire through our effort. The 'Punya' that we have acquired through our good deeds can be used by us to give happiness in this world and for purifying ourselves.

'Veda' does not place any restrictions on our experiencing worldly pleasures. It only stipulates that such pleasures are to be experienced based on the ethics of 'Dharma'. 'Punya' gives happiness in worldly life, and upon death it leads one on a good path. But, the most important benefit of 'Punya' is to give one the qualification to attain the ultimate goal of 'Moksha' or bliss.

Jnana Kanda

The ultimate part of 'Veda' is called 'Jnana Kanda' or 'Vedanta'. In Sanskrit, the word 'Anta' means the final or ultimate part. Thus, the word 'Vedanta' means the ultimate part of 'Veda'. This part discusses subjects such as 'Brahma tatwa' (nature of the God), 'Jiva tatwa' (nature of the living being), and the impermanence of the world. The investigation of the Ultimate Principle (God) is done in this portion. 'Jnana Kanda' is generally of the form of a 'Guru–Sishya' (teacher-disciple) dialogue. Such a dialogue which is present in the 'Jnana Kanda' is called 'Upanishad'. Thereby, the ultimate section of 'Veda'

on philosophical discussions is called ‘Jnana Kanda’, or ‘Vedanta’, or ‘Upanishad’. In the final part of each ‘Veda’, there are several ‘Upanishads’. Every ‘Upanishad’ undertakes the study in a unique manner and gives the knowledge that ‘Para Brahman’ (God) is the Ultimate Principle. Upanishads highlight several themes such as the qualifications for a disciple, the austerities to be undertaken by him, the type of ‘Guru’ that he should seek, and how he should approach the ‘Guru’. They also present explanations to acquire knowledge about matters such as the true nature of ‘Jiva’ (the living being), the transient nature of the world, and the eternal reality of ‘Para Brahman’.

‘Veda’ is also called ‘Sruthi’. The word ‘Sruthi’ means ‘that which is heard’. ‘Veda’ has come through the tradition of student listening and learning from the teacher, in the ‘Teacher to student’ tradition. Hence, it is called ‘Sruthi’. With the central theme of ‘Veda’, sages wrote scriptures called ‘Smruthi’. The word ‘Smruthi’ means ‘that which is kept in memory’. These scriptures were written remembering the theme and the teaching of ‘Veda’.

Sage Jaimini studied and explained the first part of the ‘Veda’, namely ‘Karma Kanda’. Sage Veda Vyasa studied and expounded the second part of ‘Veda’, namely, Vedanta or ‘Jnana Kanda’. Many great masters have written scriptures about ‘Dharma’

(Ethics), and about the nature of ‘Para Brahman’, which are all only the expositions of Veda.

7

ETHICS ('DHARMA')

Ethics is the book that studies what is right and what is wrong. It forms a part of Philosophy. Ethics or 'Moral Philosophy' is also an investigation of morality.

We classify all our actions as right actions and wrong actions. It is the text of ethics that investigates what is right and what is wrong. It is not normally easy to distinguish and understand between the right and the wrong.

At times it is also confusing. The decision about the right and the wrong is also dependent on the time and the situation. The decision that a particular thing is right is true only at certain times and in certain situations. Same is the case for what is wrong. Thereby, the investigation of 'right-versus-wrong' is rather unique.

Ethics is called 'Dharma Sastra'. The Sanskrit word 'Dharma' has several meanings. In the present context, 'Dharma' refers to what is right and good. And 'Adharma' refers to what is wrong and what is evil. Distinguishing 'Dharma' from 'Adharma' is quite simple at times, and is very difficult at other times. Also, at times we mistakenly understand 'Dharma' to be 'Adharma', and vice versa. This is the reason for the

formulation of an investigative text, in respect of 'Dharma' and 'Adharma'.

> **It may be easy to distinguish right and wrong, but tough to distinguish right and more right.**

In addition to giving the knowledge about what is right and what is wrong, the code of ethics also gives the knowledge about what is good and what is even superior.

Definition of Ethics

> **Ethics is the study of proper conduct for good living.**

The text of ethics thoroughly investigates the thoughts and actions that emanate from us, and gives decisive and conclusive knowledge about the basis for what is moral and what is immoral, and what is good and what is bad.

Let us first understand what cannot form the proper basis for deciding what is right and what is wrong.

1. Ethics can not be decided based on our feelings: Thoughts that arise in our mind without any evaluation of the right and the wrong is referred to as feelings. At

times our feelings indicate the right as right, but, there are also times when our feelings indicate what is right to be wrong. It is also our experience that many times, we perform actions on the basis of our feeling that they are right. But subsequently, we realise that we were wrong and start feeling guilty. It is clear, thereby, that our feelings alone cannot decide what is right and what is wrong.

2. Ethics are not decided on the basis of religious beliefs: All the religions intend to profess that ethics are important. There is also no difference of opinion between the religions in respect of the basic ethics taught by them. Also, the chief aim of all religions is to put man on the right path. However, in the field of religion, beliefs occupy an important place. Determining what is right and what is wrong on the basis of beliefs will not be in alignment with ethics.

We observe that among the people who live in accordance with ethics, there are those who do not believe that there is a God-principle which is the cause for this world, and there are also those who have no faith in religion. Further, we also observe that there are people have belief in religion, but who do not follow the ethics.

Also, the code of what is right and what is wrong based on religion differs from religion to religion. The actions that are held to be right by one religion are held to be wrong by another. Thus, as there are differences of opinion based on religious belief, the

question of right and wrong is out of the context in religion. Thereby, the division of right and wrong based on religious belief does not match with ethics.

For example, among the religions that accept eating of flesh as food, there are varying stipulations that flesh of certain animals can be partaken, but not the flesh of certain other animals. Also, what is accepted in one religion is held to be wrong in another. Further, we observe that the method of worship of God and other habits and practices vary from religion to religion.

Many hold the view that the belief of their religion alone is correct and that others' beliefs are not correct. And giving importance to their own belief, they even tend violate ethics in their behaviour.

Not understanding that living as per ethics alone is living as per God's directions, and that ethics are indeed the path that has been laid and shown by Him, they neglect ethics. Thereby, ethics cannot be fitted into religion; it cannot be decided based on religious beliefs.

3. Ethics cannot be decided based on law: Political Constitutions and Laws are formulated on the basis of the important intention that people should live in an ethical manner. Yet, we cannot conclude that what is stated by the laws alone is ethics. Just because something is permitted by the law, that does not become ethical. The law permits one to drink liquor

above a certain age, but that does not make drinking a good behaviour. Some laws differ from country to country and from state to state. The laws are modified from time to time. There are also different ways in which the law could be interpreted. Once upon a time, there were laws permitting slavery. Such laws are totally contradictory to ethics. We observe that laws of some countries consider capital punishment to be wrong, while those of some other countries consider them to be right. Earlier, when India was under foreign occupation, it was unlawful to express patriotism. Thereby, it will not be possible to conclude that what is lawful is by itself ethics.

4. Ethics cannot be decided based on acceptance by the society: Practices such as untouchability which were acceptable to the earlier society were contrary to ethics.

What then is the basis on which to decide what is right and what is wrong?

In fact, in respect of the right and the wrong, it is somewhat difficult to pin point that this is the manner in which we should decide, or that this is the right conclusion. Never the less, contemplating in the basic manner given by the sages we could understand the ethics, and we could lead a life regulated by it.

We could distinguish between 'What is Dharma (right)?' and 'What is Adharma (wrong)?' in the following manner.

1. What is righteous for me is righteous for others too : This is the first test to know what is 'Dharma' and what is 'Adharma'. Whatever is good for me, the same is good for others too. And whatever is not good for me is not good for others too. Thereby, whatever I expect that others should do to me, I must also do the same to them. Whatever I expect that others should not do to me, I must also not do the same to the others.

> If I expect that others should not cause sorrow to me, I should not cause sorrow to them.
>
> If I expect that others should not steal my property, I should not steal their property.
>
> If I expect that others should not tell lies to me, I should not tell lies to others.
>
> If I expect that others should love to me, I should love others.

Scriptures of all the religions express the opinion that whatever ethics are applicable for an individual, same is applicable to the world.

> **Do not do to others what you do not what them to do to you.**

This is the first lesson in learning ethics.

2. Teachings of men of wisdom: Men of wisdom or sages have understood the subtlety of 'Dharma' and have lived their lives in compliance with it. One should

listen and learn ethics from such sages.

In 'Taittiriya Upanishad', which is in 'Veda', the 'Guru' gives the following advice to the students who are about to leave the 'Gurukula' (traditional school) after learning 'Dharma Sastra':

"You should follow such good actions and practices that are in us, the teachers. If there were any flaws in us, do not follow them. Further, if you were to get a doubt as to what is 'Dharma' and what is 'Adharma', at such times, approach those wise men who have understood the 'Dharma' and are living as per 'Dharma'. Pray to them and seek the knowledge from them. Whatever they advise is 'Dharma'."

Thus, ethics are formulated and given by those who are advanced in knowledge and experience.

There are three types of superiority.

1. Senior in age ('Vayo vriddha')
2. Superior in knowledge ('Jnana Vriddha')
3. Superior in good behaviour ('Achara Vriddha')

The advice of those who are superior in good behaviour and knowledge will teach ethics to us. Our own intrinsic knowledge will not be of complete help to us. We have to acquire knowledge from other than ourselves.

3. Books: Books on ethics have been written by some wise men ('Mahatmas'), who have understood the subtlety of ethics and lived in compliance with it. Such persons may also be of our times. By a study of their books, or listening to them, and by contemplation on their advice, we can learn about ethics. There are several books which explain ethics through the stories and biographies of the 'Mahatmas'. We also have innumerable 'Dharma sastras' (codes of ethics). We have to utilise these and acquire knowledge.

The following 'Sloka' reinforces the above view about the sources for us to learn about ethics.

वेदः स्मृतिः सदाचारः स्वस्य च प्रियमात्मनः।
एतत् चतुर्विधं प्राहुः साक्षाद् धर्मस्य लक्षणम्॥

i. the 'Vedas' ('Sruthi'),

ii. the 'Smruthis',

iii. 'Sadachara' (the lifestyle of wise men), and

iv. the dictates of one's own conscience as to the ideal for the general good,

these four are said to be the direct sources for 'Dharma'.

Here the term 'Veda' refers in general to the scriptures. Vedas have themselves have stated that there is no birth and religion based restriction for its

study or for the repetition of the 'Veda mantras'. (Though many in today's society are unaware of this and might not accept such a view, this is the truth). 'Smruthi' refers to the texts written by the great people, based on 'Vedas'. 'Sadachara' is the lifestyle and path demonstrated by the great people of present times. In the fourth case, one takes oneself as the yard-stick and understands that 'what is acceptable as right and good for oneself is right and good for the others'.

Thus, the first step for us is to obtain the knowledge about what is 'Dharma' (right) and what is 'Adharma' (wrong), through an appropriate instrument of knowledge. The next, second step is to get the strength to utilise the knowledge so attained.

Need for ethical way of life

Let us see why we should live as per ethics.

To be ethical is profitable, but to be ethical because it is profitable is not ethical.

We must be ethical, because it is beneficial to us. Benefit or profit is of two types.

1. that which is pleasurable ('Preyas'), and

2. that which is beneficial ('Sreyas')

It is not ethical to be ethical only when it results in favourable and pleasurable results to us, and to avoid ethics when the results are not pleasurable. If ethics are followed just for ethics sake, then we will get true and beneficial gain. True profit is the one that gives benefit.

One could initially face some difficulties and losses, due to the pursuit of ethics. But ultimately, we will attain gains that are beneficial.

By giving up ethics, initially some pleasurable gains could result. But ultimately, we will face a true loss.

We consider the money that we could be gaining due to falsehood. But, we do not realise the great benefit that we lose in the process.

A mind which realizes this subtle and great truth is the refined and superior mind.

Man has to live as per ethics, both for the good of the individual and for the orderly functioning of the society. Moreover, for an individual to attain the ultimate goal of 'Moksha', living as per Dharma is imperative.

Ethics is meant for mankind.

Code of ethics is formulated only for humans.

There is no need of the 'Dharma Sastra' for the animals.

It is only those to whom the possibility of choice is given, that the knowledge of 'what they should choose', 'how they should choose' and 'why they should choose' can be given. It is only the human kind that has been given the opportunity to act as per free will. Man can make this opportunity either a curse or a boon.

In every step of ours, we have the opportunity to select what gives us ultimate good, or what gives us immediate pleasure, or what results in our destruction. For example, each time we take our food we could partake the food that gives us pleasure, or food that gives us benefit, or we could consume poison that leads to our destruction.

'Dharma sastra' is the scripture that has been formulated to advise on the selection of the right choice to mankind, which has the opportunity of choice in action.

Man requires two types of knowledge. Indeed, the state of his life is based on these two types of knowledge. These are,

1. **Knowledge about 'what is right and what is wrong', and**

2. Knowledge about 'what is true and what is false'.

Books of ethics have appeared to inform man about 'What is right and what is wrong'. Philosophical texts have appeared to inform man about 'What is true and what is false'.

8

SPIRITUALITY

The word 'Adhyatmyam' (Spirituality) means 'about oneself'. We should understand the meaning of this word in the context of refining oneself.

All our 'Sadhanas' (spiritual exercises) could result in two types of transformation. They are

1. Internal transformation

2. External transformation

These refer respectively to the transformation inside and outside us.

Internal transformation means transforming our mind. External transformation refers to changing the external objects and situations.

In common parlance, those who have faith in God and worship that principle are called 'Asthikas' (the believers). However, the mere fact that they worship God does not mean that they are spiritual. Most believers use God as a mere tool for attaining their goals. Moreover, they also lack basic knowledge

about God. They have faith in God, but not knowledge about God. Such persons have worldly objects as their goal, and in order to acquire the desired objects, they pray to God and worship Him. Whatever be the austerity they may undertake in this process, they have not entered spirituality. All their 'Sadhana' is for the transformation of the exterior situations and objects; there will be no inner transformation or change.

Internal transformation is the change that we bring about in our mind. It is the removal of the sinful thoughts and qualities, and acquiring pure thoughts and qualities. Whoever undertake 'Sadhanas' (necessary practices) to bring about such an internal transformation, they alone can be said to have entered the portals of spirituality.

Need for Inner Transformation

At the outset let us see why such inner transformation is necessary.

An individual went to the Doctor and complained that he experienced pain, whichever the part of his body he might touch with his finger. So he concluded that his entire body was affected with pain and he wanted his entire body to be treated and cured.

The doctor made a thorough test and said,

"There is nothing wrong with your body, it is in good health. You have an internal wound just in your index finger. So, you experience pain whatever part of your body you may touch with that finger. It is enough if your finger alone is treated".

A weak and immature mind is like this affected index finger. When an individual transacts with the world with such a mind, he experiences emotions such as likes, dislikes, anger, and jealousy and this results in sorrow. We interact with the world only through our mind. And based on the nature of our mind, we experience happiness or sorrow. Thereby, instead of improving our mind, it is futile to attempt to change the world. True benefit will result only by changing the nature of our mind. When we interact with the world, with a refined mind that is pure and steady, we will not be affected by the world.

Thus, for attaining a fulfilled life, inner transformation is inevitable. Indeed, effort for inner transformation is true spiritual 'Sadhana' (practice).

Spiritual practice can be covered in just the following three sentences:

1. Until when has spiritual practice not commenced?
2. When is spiritual practice underway?
3. When does spiritual practice culminate?

1. Till such time that we keep blaming others or the circumstances for the sorrows that are experienced by us, our spiritual practice has not commenced.
2. When we find fault with ourselves for the sorrows that are experienced by us, our spiritual practice is under progress.
3. When we do not blame either ourselves or others or the circumstances for the sorrows that are experienced by us, then our spiritual practice has culminated.

We will investigate these three stages further.

Stage I

Most people in the world hold other people or the external situations as being responsible for all the difficulties faced by them. Thereby, all their efforts are directed at changing the external situations and people, and there will be no progress or improvement in their own minds. There will be no change in the weaknesses in their mind and their nature of wrong understanding. Their two qualities that are important hurdles for their progress are:

Justification and Accusation

The qualities that are in our mind and that hinder our progress are 'our justification of our actions', and 'our tendency to put the blame on others'.

If anyone points out our mistakes, the correct response would be to listen and introspect, before

reacting. Instead, most of us do not accept criticism and tend to justify ourselves. Without accepting the responsibility for our mistakes, it has become our nature to put the blame on others.

So long as we have these two lowly qualities, we cannot improve ourselves and we cannot enter spirituality. Such people might be doing worship, prayer, and such other religious practices. Yet, the fact is that they have not commenced their spiritual journey.

Second Stage

Those who are in this stage have found out that their own ignorance and incapacity are the reasons for the difficulties that they face.

Having realized this reason, they engage themselves in 'Sadhanas' that improve and purify them. The practices that they undertake are to remove their ignorance and their incapability. They are indeed the people who are traveling on the spiritual path. Spiritual practice refers to the refinement of the mind. As these aspirants are engaged in the appropriate practices and as their minds are being refined, they are the spiritual seekers.

The first stage of 'Sadhana' that they engage themselves in is 'Karma Yoga'. Commencing with Karma Yoga, they progress steadily to Meditation, and study of 'Sastra'. The prime reason for their efforts by way of these spiritual practices is their recognition that

the cause for their sorrow is not in the surroundings, but in them.

As they have accepted the 'Self-responsibility' that they indeed are responsible for their sorrow, all the austerities that they undertake are of the nature of refining themselves. They will at first become virtuous. Thereafter, by engaging in the 'Jnana Yoga' (study and contemplation of 'Sastra') they will progress to the next stage of 'Mukti' (liberation). Being in such a liberated stage is the highest achievement possible in human life. In comparison most persons, even those who believe in God, remain just in the first stage.

Those who are in the first stage and are desirous of progressing to the second stage, should start following and living as per 'Dharma' (Ethics). This alone raises the level of a person gradually and steadily.

Third Stage

Those who have reached this stage have complete knowledge about the nature of God. They are aware of the similarity and identity between themselves and God. Further, they have also refined their minds. They are not afflicted by emotions such as attachment, hatred, jealousy, and anger. They fully accept the experiences of happiness and unhappiness that arise at the physical level. Having completed all the practices that they have to do, they are called 'Siddhas' or 'Muktas'.

Having realised the Self, and having realised the transient and impermanent nature of the world, with the aid of the self knowledge they have acquired, they will live in this world unaffected in any manner.

'Mukti' or 'Moksham' is the steady peace experienced in the deeper mind, even while the body is subject to pleasurable and sorrowful experiences. This is a state attainable only through self-knowledge. For a person who has reached such a state, there is neither gain by performing a task and nor loss by not performing a task. They will lead a normal life quite like others. Yet, as a result of the self-knowledge that they have attained, their mind would have the strength and maturity that is not comprehensible to normal people.

We see that people are generally afflicted by this world. Such being the case, we might wonder how the 'Muktas', who are also living in this world, are able to face the world with a smile. Let us understand this through the following example.

An advertisement still shows the picture of a ferocious dog, and at a short distance in front of it, a cat is seen sitting calmly and unperturbed. At first sight, this picture presents the unbelievable. It is surprising to see that a cat, which has a timid nature and which should be running away upon seeing the dog, is instead sitting calmly. Upon scrutiny, we find that the dog in the picture is tied by a leash to a post. The cat has realized the fact that the leashed dog poses no threat to it. Thereby, it is sitting fearlessly at a short distance from the dog. This picture has the caption

'Power of Knowledge'. The message given by this picture is that 'True knowledge gives us great courage'.

When we realise that this world does not have the ability to truly affect us, we can live in this world as 'Muktas' or liberated persons. Living thus in this world, without a sense of lack, is indeed 'Mukti'.

9

RELIGION AND ETHICS

Man cannot escape from the thought of God.

Man engages in the thought about God. He takes one of the three decisions, 'that God exists'; 'that God does not exist'; or 'that it is not known if God exists or not'. Men are unable to be without the thought of the principle of God. The thought about God manifests in the mind of man without his choice. Man comes to three types of conclusion about God.

1. The conclusion that 'God is there': Those who have this contention are called 'Theists'.
2. The conclusion that 'There is no God': Those who have this contention are called 'Atheists'.
3. The conclusion that 'it cannot be decided if God exist or not': Those who have this belief are called 'Agnostics'. Their contention is that it is not possible to conclude that 'God exists'. At the same time, they contend that It is also not possible to conclude that 'God does not exist'.

All these three conclusions are arrived at only on the basis of belief. Those who accept that 'God exists' are not people who have complete knowledge about God. They are just believers only. So also, those who

believe that ‘there is no God’ are not people who have found out about the absence of God. The third set of people believes that is not possible to either prove that God exists, or that God does not exist. For all these three contentions it is belief that is the basis. The conclusions arrived at based on one’s belief may be his contention, but cannot be the right knowledge.

Faith

Belief is the stepping-stone to Knowledge. In the initial stages, when the mind is not sufficiently refined to receive the knowledge about God, faith in God helps an individual to progress. That is, faith in God helps an individual to get knowledge about God.

Beliefs are formed in one’s mind, based on the refinement of the mind. They are of many types. Some beliefs become the basic reasons for our good and progress. Some beliefs become the basic reasons for our downfall and evil. It is not important, if our belief is true or false. What is more important is whether our belief gives us peace and benefit, or violence and downfall.

Man cannot live without the support of belief. What is important is the type of belief that we are taking as our support. This alone decides the life of an individual and the status of the society.

The belief that ‘a principle called God exists’, forms the basic reason for getting the knowledge about God. Belief in god becomes the motivator for

the refinement of man's mind and for following the 'Dharma' (Ethics). Belief in God results in manifold benefits in human life. Thereby, all the religions try to cultivate belief in God and to refine the God-belief. The true intention of religion is cultivate faith in and devotion to God, and to engage man in ethics.

The real intention of all the religions is to cultivate love and devotion in man towards God, engage them in a life based on Ethics and to make them attain the God-state. No religion preaches that one could give up 'Dharma' (right conduct) and pursue 'Adharma' (undesirable conduct). They all have the intentions that all men should live as per Ethics.

Religions have appeared to lead man to a godly level. If that is so, the question arises as to why the religious differences are leading to violence and destruction.

People have not correctly understood their respective religions. This is the reason for the violence arising out of religious differences. Without understanding the true import of religion, they give greater importance to faith and do not pursue the Ethics. Thus, religion which intends to teach Ethics is misunderstood and ends up as the cause of the destruction of the society.

Each religion gives a name to God. Names are not important, what is important is the God-principle that is indicated. But, people give importance to the name and give up the truth. So also, having faith in

God and love towards Him is important. The methods of worship are not important. The methods of worship vary from religion to religion. These methods of worship have no connection to Ethics. For example, the body of a dead person following a particular religion is taken to the place of worship. In another religion, this is not permitted. The question, as to what is right and what is not, is irrelevant in this context. Thus, Ethics does not cover religious beliefs, rituals, methods of worship, etc. If this is understood, it will become clear that religion is but a stepping stone that has to be transcended. But, many do not realise this fact. They do not understand the true purpose of religion and give up Ethics.

It cannot also be concluded that those who have faith in God and those who undertake religious practices per se, live their lives as per Ethics. Further, we also see some people who do not have faith in God, but live as per Ethics.

Though the main purpose of all the religions is to teach Ethics, as people have failed to understand the true intention of religion, a gap has developed between religion and ethics. People do not easily realise that it is the intention of religion that rituals and belief are to be superseded for the sake of ethics.

Human race has created several different types of divisions within itself. Some such divisions are based on imaginary ideas. The division based on religion is also one such. But, the human race is not prepared to understand this easily.

Religion that is correctly understood results in

great good to the individual and the society. In the same manner, religion that is misunderstood results in great evil to the individual and the society. Many religious beliefs are contradictory to Ethics. Thus, Ethics is also beyond the religion. Just as ethics is not bound by the political law, so is not bound by limitations of religion. If a person realizes the true nature of religion, he will benefit from religion. And religion will also stand as a steady companion for him to pursue ethics well.

Food that is digested gives strength to the body. Food that is not digested becomes poison for the body. So also, properly understood religion results in one's good. Religion that is not understood results in the downfall of a person. Religion in itself is neither good nor bad. It is on the basis of understanding of religion that either good or bad results.

10

VALUES ('SADGUNAM')

Preface

God has blessed all the beings that are living in this world with a mind. The life styles of these beings are formed on the basis of the nature of the qualities that are in their minds. Every animal is born with its appropriate character, lives with that character, and dies with it. For example, a dog is born with the quality of gratitude; it lives with it, and dies with it ultimately. The dog does not choose the quality of gratitude and follow it. It is born with that quality. Thereby, the dog cannot give up its quality of gratitude.

All animals are born with certain qualities at their very birth. They have not been given the opportunity to be able to change their qualities. No animal can select a quality and follow it. It is not possible for an animal to change its character or nature. A cow will always be a cow and a lion will be a lion, in their character. Thereby, it is not possible for the animals to improve the quality of their life and the degree of happiness that they can experience. Whatever type of food was eaten by a lion that lived hundred years ago, the same type of food is eaten by the lion that lives today. Just as there is no progress in the lives of animals, so also there is no regression either.

What about the Man!

Human beings are given two characteristics that have not been given to animals.

1. **Self-consciousness – Being aware of oneself.**
2. **Free-will: The ability to choose and act.**

1. Self-consciousness (Self-awareness): Man is aware of himself. He can identify his own body. He can observe his mind and find its characteristics.

Animals have not been given the knowledge of being aware of themselves. A dog does not know that it is a dog. Looking at a mirror, it cannot identify its image as its own. The dog does not know that it has a good quality called gratitude. But, the human is born with the opportunity of being aware of himself.

2. Free-will : Man is given the opportunity to choose and function. Man can know the positives and negatives in his mind. He is also given the choice to transform the qualities that are in his mind. That is how man can either improve the quality of his life and the degree of his happiness, or he can depress them.

Only man can experience the higher degree of happiness that results due to qualities such as sacrifice, and forgiveness. By taking up austerities, man alone is capable of transforming his mind.

Just as man is able to experience superior happiness that an animal cannot experience, in the same manner, he also experiences the sorrows that animals never experience. Animals do not experience sorrow due to qualities such as inferiority complex, arrogance, and jealousy. In contrast, a human experiences these sorrows.

The code of ethics is necessary only for those beings that have the characteristics of Self-consciousness and Free-will. Where there is no opportunity to choose, there is no point in advising – "Do this; Don't do that". The children and the mentally retarded do not have the ability to choose and function. Thereby, the code of ethics does not apply to them. The normal human definitely needs the code of ethics.

Man, who is self-conscious and who can function as per his free-will, should function in a manner whereby it will result in his own welfare and superior happiness. He must act in the manner by which he can transform his mind that will result in his own welfare. To be able to function thus, he must become aware initially of the mental discipline that he needs.

Requisites of the mind

When mind gets the qualities of steadfastness and purity, such a mind functions as our best friend and makes our life to blossom. Mind requires the two important disciplines,

1. Concentration power ('Chitta Ekagrata')

2. Values ('Sadgunam')

1. Concentration Power ('Chitta Ekagrata'): When a task is undertaken, mind should not get distracted and should be focused with full involvement on that task. For example, if we have taken a book for reading, in that period, our mind should concentrate on the task of reading. Thus, in whatever tasks we might get engaged, our mind should function with concentration in those tasks. When our mind gets distracted by different thoughts, we cannot perform the task on hand well. Thus, the first training that we have to give to our mind is the practice of concentration. It is the very nature of the mind to be flitting. But the same mind gets focused on a subject that it likes. While the mind has the flitting nature, it also has the ability to focus. Mind gets concentration on the subject that it likes. And it gets distracted and does not stay focused on a subject that it does not like.

It is not possible for us to inculcate a liking in our mind towards all the duties that we have to perform. So irrespective of whether our mind likes it or not, wherever it has to function with concentration, our mind should have the ability to function so. Such ability can be given to the mind through the practice of 'Dhyana' (Meditation). Practice of 'Dhyana' gives the power of concentration ('Chitta Ekagrata') to the mind.

Just as physical exercises give strength to the body, by undertaking the practice of 'Dhyana' that can strengthen the mind, one has to acquire the ability to concentrate.

It is not enough if the mind gets just the concentration power. Thereafter, such mind has to be purified. We cannot live happily, if we have the power of concentration alone. In 'Puranic' times, 'Asuras' like Ravana had great ability to concentrate the mind. But, they did not have pure minds. As a result, they got ultimately destroyed. Therefore, the discipline of purity of mind is very important.

2. Values ('Sadgunam') : We refer to a mind that has good values as a pure mind. And we call that mind which has negative qualities to be an impure or a sick mind.

There is no rule that a mind with the power of concentration will have purity also. Therefore, our greater effort must be towards refining or purifying the mind ('Chitta Suddhi').

Purification of the mind is achieved in two ways.

1. **'Guna Adaanam' – by Acquiring good qualities.**
2. **'Dosha apanayanam' – by Removing evil qualities**

Acquiring good qualities and removing negative qualities comprise the purification of the mind. We adopt a similar approach in the case of our physical body. By taking a bath, the impurities are removed from the physical body initially, and then some fragrant substances are applied. In Bhagavad Gita, Sri Krishna has explained the good qualities that are to be acquired under the title of 'Daivi Sampat' (divine qualities) and the negative qualities that are to be removed under the title of 'Asuri sampat' (evil qualities).

We term such a mind to be pure and steady, wherein the negative qualities are removed and the good qualities are attained; and which has the ability to concentrate.

Definition of Values

That quality in the mind which results in welfare to us and to the others is said to be a good value (virtue).

That quality in the mind which results in harm to us and harm to the others is said to be a bad quality.

Initially, with the help of code of ethics, we must get clarity of what the good values are and which the bad qualities are. Thereafter, we must take the necessary efforts, to acquire those good values and for removing the bad qualities.

In the codes of ethics, the list of good values that our mind should possess, the list of bad qualities that have to be removed from our mind, and the disciplines that we must pursue, are given in detail. In the following, a short, indicative list is given.

Good Values and Good Behaviour

Responsibility	Self-dignity
Non-violence	Acceptance
Truth	Austerity
Love	Alertness
Forgiveness	Faith
Patience	Devotion
Compassion	Service
Cleanliness	Sacrifice
Honesty	Solitude
Courage	Silence
Humility	Gratitude
Charity	Chastity
Simplicity	Endurance
Sense-control	Health
Balance	Good-association

Bad Qualities and Bad Behaviour

Attachment	Accusation
Hatred	Stealing
Anger	Superiority Complex
Miserliness	Inferiority Complex
Pride	Self-glorification
Jealousy	Pretentiousness
Delusion	Justification
Fear	Blaming
Laziness	Revenge

Need of Values

Let us investigate, initially, as to why good values are required! Following the Code of Ethics and living with good values is essential,

1. for happiness at the individual level,

2. for orderly function of the society, and

3. for acquiring the qualifications necessary for 'Moksha' (Liberation).

1. For happiness at the individual level : Health of the physical body is essential for a person, to be able to

experience the pleasures of this world, and to live happily. So also, the health and well being of the mind is necessary, to be able to experience the pleasures of this world, and to live happily. If the mind were to be weak and sick, one cannot live happily in this world. For such a person, taking a birth in this world would appear to be a curse. If negative feelings like jealousy, fear, and hatred are resident in the mind, whatever be the surroundings, one would be living in veritable hell. King Duryodhana lived his entire life in the royal palace amidst pleasures. Yet, since jealousy, fear, and such negative qualities were entrenched in his mind, he could not live happily. A mind filled with bad qualities is a sick mind. A mind with good values is a healthy mind. The good values that we pursue result in our own welfare to begin with, and then they result in the welfare of the others. For example, good qualities such as forgiveness, kindness, and charity result in our welfare at first, and subsequently in the welfare of the others.

In contrast, our negative qualities result in harm to us to start with, and then only result in giving sorrow to the others. For example, anger, jealousy, hatred and such other negative qualities cause sorrow to us first and thereafter only cause sorrow to the others.

Thereby, we can live happily only when we have good qualities in our mind. We may be giving up good values and right conduct, and live with negative qualities and sinful actions, just in order to acquire worldly objects. But, we will never get any happiness out of such ill-gotten objects. Right conduct and good

values are the basic reasons for an individual's happy life.

Self Esteem : When we pursue good values, we will develop respect on ourselves. And we will feel a sense of rightful pride. At times, it might appear that the reason for our sorrow is that the others are not respecting us. But, the true reason for such sorrow is our own lack of self esteem. Self esteem is very important. Such self esteem will be felt only when we pursue good qualities. This is what is referred to as 'Atma Balam' (inner strength).

2. For orderly function of the society : Society is but a conglomeration of people. When a group of wise men are together it becomes a good society. When the individual's behaviour and qualities become sinful, when the individual persons give up 'Dharma', the social system starts to degrade and deteriorate. Just as right conduct and good qualities are essential for the proper life of an individual, so also, 'Dharma' (Code of Ethics) is essential for the proper functioning of the society.

Thus, Ethics are important both for the proper function of both the individual and the society.

3. For acquiring the qualifications necessary for 'Moksha' : One's life becomes happy, by living in this world according to Ethics and by acquiring good qualities. Those who have good qualities in their mind experience greater happiness in this world.

‘Dharma’ is capable of giving two benefits :

1. Primary benefit (‘Mukhya Phalam’), and

2. Secondary benefit (‘Avaantara Phalam’)

When we mill oil seeds such as sesame and ground nut, the primary benefit that results is the extracted oil. The waste cake that is left out is the secondary benefit.

If one pursues ‘Dharma’, the mind becomes peaceful, becomes steady, and it experiences greater happiness in this world. Even so, this pleasurable benefit given by ‘Dharma’ is but the secondary benefit. This benefit is comparable to the waste or bye product. If one pursues a life based on Ethics and acquires good qualities, the primary benefit that he gets is the eligibility for ‘Moksha’ (Liberation). ‘Dharma’ prepares us and makes us fit for attaining the ultimate goal, namely Liberation (which is eternal bliss). As a result of ‘Dharma’, one gets that intellectual ability to distinguish between that which is eternal from that which is not (‘Nitya- Anitya Viveka’). Following such ability, one gets a sense of detachment (‘Vairagya’) towards the ever-changing objects and pleasures. One develops a keen interest in that which is eternal. ‘Dharma’ gives all the qualifications that are essential for acquiring the knowledge about the Ultimate (‘Brahman’). This indeed is the primary benefit of ‘Dharma’ (Ethics).

Thus, 'Dharma Sastra' results in the three-fold benefits to us, namely, for the experience of the worldly pleasures; for the proper functioning of the society; and for giving us the eligibility for 'Moksha'.

Method to acquire Values

There are three steps involved in the acquisition of good qualities namely, knowledge, keenness to acquire, and the effort. 'Sastra' describes these steps as,

जानाति इच्छति यतते

He gets to know - He desires - He puts in effort.

1. One has to get the basic knowledge about the values, initially.
2. One must have a strong desire to acquire the values.
3. One must then engage oneself persistently, in the appropriate effort to acquire the values.

Through these three steps, we could acquire the desired good qualities.

1. Knowledge :- The basic requirement for acquiring good values is knowledge. Let us investigate the nature of such knowledge.

To start with, we must know what these good

values are, and the source from which we can know about them. One could learn about the good qualities that should be acquired and the negative qualities that should be given up from sources such as, the texts that describe Ethics; from the lives of wise persons; and from the law that "we should behave with others in the manner in which we desire them to behave with us". Thus firstly, we have to recognize the source of information about the value.

Next, we should fully understand the nature of the value that we desire to acquire. Often due to lack of understanding of the nature of a value, we tend to conclude that the value cannot be practiced, or that we cannot achieve progress in our life, if we were to practice that value. For example, if we have not fully understood the value of being truthful, we might conclude that one cannot live in this world by speaking the truth. Thereby, it is essential to understand the nature of the values.

Further, we need knowledge about the benefits that accrue from good values and about the type of effort that we need to undertake to acquire the values.

2. Strong Desire :- Mere knowledge as to what good values are, would not give us those values. We must kindle strong desire in ourselves for those values. This strong desire in our mind would propel us to act. Thereby, we need advice about the values and as to how to cultivate strong desire in them.

3. Action :- We must take action that is appropriate, to acquire any value. So also, it is important for us to obtain knowledge about the type of effort to be put. Thus, getting such advice, engaging ourselves fully in the suitable action, we must attain the values.

Knowledge + Strong Desire + Persistent Effort

= Reaching the Goal

Thus, when the above three, namely, knowledge, strong desire, and persistent effort are combined, we attain the desired goal.

The following points of advice will assist us in acquiring knowledge about values, to cultivate the strong desire in them, and to undertake the right effort.

1. Open Mind : Just as we are open while speaking with people who are close to us, we must have an open approach to our mind. If we have such openness, we would see our mind just as we see our face in the mirror. We would then be able to notice the negative qualities which are in our mind. At this stage, we should neither hate ourselves, nor should we undervalue ourselves. Instead, we should feel that we are just observing and noticing the negative quality that is in our mind. We should then decide upon the negative quality that we intend to remove to start with, and also the good quality that we intend to acquire at first. Thereafter, we must engage in our effort with full force.

Often times, our mind is not prepared for a new knowledge and for refinement. When we come to a conclusion, our mind gets attached to that conclusion. Even when it is necessary to change that conclusion, our mind is not prepared to change itself. So, we must truly open up our mind. But, we are scared of seeing our own mind. For example, there are some people who are afraid of getting themselves examined by a doctor, for fear that the doctor might point out that some disease is present. In the same manner, many are afraid of seeing their own minds. It is necessary that we open up our minds and look within. Only then will we realise as to the type of mental transformation that is necessary. When we know our own mind, our requirements will be crystal clear to us.

Man is ignorant of his own real need.

Opening up of our mind and seeing is to find out our real need. Thereby, we can clearly identify the good qualities that we need. Knowing our need thus becomes the first stage.

2. Listening : Many wish to speak, but only few are willing to listen.

Listening is a great art.

The mental state of 'willingness to listen' is a great way to get knowledge. When others point out our flaws or

weaknesses or mistakes, we refuse to listen to them, out right. Knowing our tendency of not listening, our well wishers refrain from giving good advice to us. ‘Practicing to listen’ is an important value. A mental state of willingness to listen is the prime reason, to get to know our own faults and for getting knowledge about other good values.

Next, we should note the type of mental state with which we have to listen. Particularly, when others point out our weaknesses, we should listen with the following three attitudes in our mind.

1. **Acceptance**
2. **Non-justification**
3. **Non-accusation**

Only a mind that is trained to listen with humility and these three attitudes would acquire the knowledge.

3. Value of value : The most important reason why we are unable to follow a given value is because we do not realise the value (worth) of that value (virtue). We tend to underestimate the worth of superior goals, objects, thoughts and values.

It is a common flaw in our intellect to underestimate the superior and to overestimate the inferior.

Many a time the Intellect undervalues or overvalues a fact.

When we underestimate a good quality, our desire to acquire that quality and our effort and drive to pursue it reduce. Thus, the underestimation reduces our desire to acquire it and our ability to strive for it.

Let us take the example of the value 'Truthfulness'('Satyam'). For correctly understanding this value and for pursuing it with full vigour and enthusiasm, we must give a high value to this virtue. Such high value arises from two locations, as

1. Intellectual Value, and

2. Emotional Value.

Only when high estimation is given from both these angles, could we put our fullest effort for acquiring that value.

It is easy to know a value,

but it is tough to value the value.

When the 'Puranas' recount the stories of people like Harischandra, their intention is not to tell us that 'Truthfulness' is a good value. Their intention is to indicate the high worth of the value, 'Truth'.

If the stories that we read, our direct experiences, and the lessons that we learn from others' lives impress on us the superiority of the values, then alone would we get maturity in our intellect and emotion which is commensurate with our age.

It is very important for us to have a high value for the value that we desire to acquire. If we don't value the value that we desire, then how is it possible for us to get it? Therefore, our value for the value must be supreme.

4. Visualisation of Benefit ('Artha Darsanam') : The word 'Artha' indicates the benefit that is expected, and the word 'Darsanam' means visualizing repeatedly in our mind. Only when we realise the benefit that will accrue upon attaining a value, would we develop a respect for that value. It is only on the basis of the gain that results from a particular thing that we develop a keen interest in it. The value for a virtue and the strong desire to pursue that virtue would give the motivation to work for attaining that value.

It is only upon acquiring a good quality, that we would experience the benefit from it. And it is upon experiencing such benefit from that value that we would develop the high regard for that value and the keen desire for that value. Even in such a state of not having an experience of the benefit, when we repeatedly think of the likely benefits from that virtue, we will develop the value for that value.

Therefore, upon deciding the value that we would like to acquire, we have to understand, seriatim, the benefits that are likely to be gained. Then, we have to repeatedly visualise in our mental eye, how our life would be happy and glorious, if we were to have that particular value. Such visualisation becomes a kind of meditation. The act of visualising the benefit before our mental-eye can also be undertaken by us as a meditation.

To make us purchase an item, the advertisers highlight the likely benefits from that item. Indeed, it is on a similar basis that in scriptures such as the 'Puranas', the benefits due to 'Tapas' (austerities) are magnified somewhat and stated. For example, it is said that taking a bath in river Ganga, being awake on Sivarathri night, chanting certain 'Stotras', etc., the sins (demerits) accumulated in several lives are said to be washed away. The intention is to indicate the glory of those austerities and to kindle our interest in them. Thus, repeated meditation on the benefits of the virtues paves the way for acquiring them.

5. Visualisation of the Loss ('Anartha Darsanam'): The word 'Anartha' means loss, sorrow, etc. Realising the loss that would result to us if we do not have a particular virtue would motivate us to acquire that virtue. Just as the realization of the benefit form a value is important, so is the realisation of the loss on account of not having that value.

Inner maturity of a human being is not in knowing what is right or wrong, but in knowing what one loses when one does the wrong thing.

If we take the example of the virtue 'Truthfulness', it because of our not realising the loss that we incur due to not pursuing that value, and the consequences thereupon that we give up pursuing that virtue. When we give up pursuing 'Truthfulness' our mind perceives a short-term gain, at that moment and in that situation. In order to gain that temporary advantage, 'Truthfulness' is not being pursued by us. But in the process, our mind fails to notice the loss that results. Since the attention is on the gain, the mind does not realise the loss. When our mind is deluded by the lowly gains due to bad habits such as smoking or drinking, it loses its capacity to realise the consequent loss due to such habits. Our mind which intends always to evaluate the gain and loss in each and every action and choose the gain, fails miserably in this case.

If the magnitude of the likely gain due to falsehood is compared to the magnitude of the likely loss a subtle mind would definitely realise that the loss is manifold compared to the gain.

Similarly, if one were to compare the pleasure that is experienced by our tongue from food items with the consequent loss in health, and when the mind realises that the loss is manifold compared to the pleasure gained, then alone will it pursue value of

discipline in food for the sake of good health.

Scriptures such as 'Puranas' and 'Itihasas' advise, sometimes exaggeratedly, that if one were to pursue evil thoughts and deeds, one would incur sin (demerit /'Papa') which will lead to great sorrow. Their intention in such advice is to make one realise the loss that results due to giving up of good qualities.

Thus, when we deeply realise the serious loss that results on account of giving up of a virtue, such realisation itself will propel us to acquire that value.

6. Vow ('Sankalpa') : When we study the scriptures and when we listen to spiritual matters, we would identify and record in our mind, a rather large list of good values that we have to acquire. And the desire to pursue those values would sprout in us. It is not possible at all to pursue and practice the entire set of the values, all at the same time. For attaining each value, a particular type of technique and practice would be required. We should investigate and identify the virtue that we need to acquire immediately and give first priority to it. We must take a 'Sankalpa' (resolve/ vow) in our mind to acquire that prioritised value. A vow is a command that we give to us. Only when we compel our mind with such a vow, could we become free from weaknesses such as laziness and tendency to postpone, and could progress.

If we give too much of liberty to our mind, it would not continue to function with the required

resolve. We must therefore take the pursuit of the virtue that we desire as a vow. Then only will our mind give importance to the pursuit of that value. For example, if a person were to take up 'Japa' (recitation of a particular name of God), in a short period the 'Japa' is likely to be given up. Instead, if the person were to take a vow to do 'Japa', deciding to do it at a specified time every day, for a specific duration, for a specific number or repetitions, etc., he would definitely be successful in performing and completing the 'Japa'.

In this instance, keeping a virtue as the immediate goal, taking a vow in the mind to acquire that value within a specific time is called 'Sankalpa'. The 'Sankalpa' which is taken by us binds us with the 'Sadhana' (practice) to be undertaken for acquiring that value. If we do not formulate a discipline for ourselves through such resolve, we are quite likely to deviate from our efforts easily.

In our life, without our being aware of them, we make certain resolves and we function on their basis. When such a 'Sankalpa' happens to be a negative one, irrespective of whoever might attempt to stop us, we do not care, and we proceed to reach our own downfall. So also, if our 'Sankalpa' were to be a good one, whatever be the obstacle, we would be able to overcome them and function to reach our goal.

A certain person got cheated, and took an unconscious 'Sankalpa' to take revenge. All his

subsequent thoughts and actions formed on the basis of that 'Sankalpa', and finally he could take revenge against the person who cheated him. But unfortunately, in the process of taking revenge, he violated the law and faced punishment.

This example demonstrates the strength of 'Sankalpa'. It also makes us understand that if we were to utilise the great strength of the power of 'Sankalpa' properly and in the right direction, we would definitely attain a good result.

Without our own awareness, many 'Sankalpas' (resolves) manifest in our mind and we are performing actions on that basis. If were to take a 'Sankalpa' to acquire the virtue that is ahead of us as the goal, and function, then alone would we be able to acquire that virtue.

7. 'Sat Sang' (Good Association) : Let us recapitulate the following story that we know. A certain person gave a wooden stick to his son and asked him to break it; the son could do so easily. Then the father put a bunch of similar sticks together, gave the bundle to the son and asked him to break it. The boy could not break even a single stick of that bunch. Then, the father explained the merit of 'Unity' to his son.

This example would appear to be quite simple to us. But, there is a very subtle concept hidden in it. Though the son had enough strength to break a single

stick when it was separate, he could not break even one stick when it was in the company of others, as a bunch. In the bunch of sticks, no individual stick could give any additional strength to its adjacent sticks. Such being the case, wherefrom did the extra resistance come so that even a single stick could not be broken! If we ponder, we would understand that apart from the strength of an individual stick, an extra strength is coming due to the association. We may not be able to logically explain the origin of this extra strength. All the same, we realise that this new strength has resulted from association.

With a view to acquire a virtue, if a 'Sadhaka' were to undertake the effort alone, he would at times find the 'Sadhana' difficult or he might even be unable to continue. When one lacks the strength to continue the 'Sadhana' alone, if he were to keep the company of other 'Sadhakas' engaged in the same 'Sadhana', due to such association ('Sat Sang') he derives a new strength to pursue his 'Sadhana'. When 'Sadhakas' with the same goal associate, and pursue the 'Sadhana', they get even greater strength than when they were pursuing the goal individually.

In the term 'Sat Sang' , the word 'Sat' means 'good', and the word 'Sang' indicates 'association'. Thus, 'Sat sang' means 'association with good persons'.

Such good persons are of two types:

1. those who possess superior virtues than ourselves. They are our 'Gurus' who guide us.
2. 'Sadhakas' (spiritual aspirants), who like us are engaged in 'Sadhana', and have the same goal.

The association that we keep with 'Gurus', and other 'Sadhakas' is termed 'Sat Sang'.

Through 'Sat sang', a 'Sadhaka' derives new strength. Besides, it protects the 'Sadhaka' from forgetting his goal and from deviating from his path to the goal. In the society, we notice that those who do not seek the support of 'Sat sang', forget their lofty goal in a short while, and deviate from path of good conduct.

Tell me about your friend,

I will tell about you.

The above proverb explains that the character of the people with whom we get associated, becomes our own very soon. The association with the wise men would refine us, who are not refined at present.

'Sat sang' denotes, not merely, the association that we keep with our 'Guru' and other fellow students. The type of books that we read, the books that we repeatedly study, the persons whom we take to be our role models, the people in whose presence we are happy, all these are also 'Sat sang'.

'Sadhanas' such as 'Dhyana' (Meditation), 'Vrata' (Austerity) which are indeed to be performed solitarily, could be commenced collectively in 'Sat sang', to start with. Subsequently upon acquiring enough strength, one should pursue such 'Sadhanas' individually. However, 'Sadhanas' such as 'Sastra Vichara' (study of scriptures), should be pursued with the assistance of the 'Guru' only.

Just as we get refined in association with the good people ('Sat Sang'), we fall when we associate with the evil persons ('Dus Sang'). Thereby, avoiding evil company is equally important as seeking 'Sat Sang'. It is not possible for us to have association with both the good and the bad persons. Our association with one set will automatically separate us from the association with the other.

Thus, when the 'Sadhakas' are unable to pursue their 'Sadhanas' individually, they should seek the assistance of 'Sat Sang', derive the requisite strength, and succeed in their 'Sadhana'.

8. Self- punishment ('Parihara' or 'Prayaschitta') : Oftentimes our mind pursues good behaviour, out of fear of punishment. In this instance, we are attempting to utilise the feeling of fear, in a positive manner. Acquisition of a positive quality or giving up of a

negative quality is a rather difficult task. Many times, while we are engaged in our ‘Sadhana’, due to reasons such as lack of attention and laziness, we tend to commit mistakes again and again. So, we slip in our ‘Sadhana’ again and again. Giving a punishment to our selves is a good idea, to prevent this from happening. Whenever we repeat a mistake that we had done earlier, we should undertake to perform ‘Parihara’ (atonement). ‘Parihara’ or ‘Prayaschitta’ is the punishment that we give to us, after realising the mistake that we have committed.

Let us assume, for example, that we had decided to acquire the virtue of ‘not hurting others by our speech’, and that we are engaged in efforts to attain that goal. Whenever we happen to slip from our ‘Sadhana’ and hurt others by our speech, we should give a punishment to ourselves, as atonement (‘Prayaschitta’).

‘Dharma Sastra’ describes ‘Prayaschitta Karmas’(expiatory actions), elaborately. We must undertake ‘Prayaschitta’ that is commensurate with the degree of hurt that we have caused to others. ‘Vrata’ (austerity), ‘Japa’ (repetition of God’s name), ‘Dana’ (Charity), ‘Seva’ (service to others) are all indicated as ‘Prayaschitta Karmas’.

When we give such self-punishment to atone the mistake, we get relieved of the demerit (‘Papa’) that

has resulted from our mistake. And it serves as a warning to prevent us from repeating such a mistake.

Forgiving a mistake is a good value, but only when it is applied to the mistakes committed by others. It should not be applied to our own mistakes. Instead, by giving punishment to ourselves for the mistakes committed, we should attempt to refine and improve us.

The intention of self-punishment is neither to destroy nor to weaken ourselves. Self-punishment should improve our physical and mental strengths, and not decrease them. This is the reason why our 'Sastras', suggest 'Japa' (repeating Gods' name), 'Dana' (charity), etc., as 'Prayaschitta Karmas'.

Not recognising our mistakes and overlooking them, and repeating the same mistakes, form the major obstacles for our progress. Thereby, through 'Prayaschitta Karmas' (by appropriate self-punishment) for our mistakes, we could pursue our 'Sadhanas' and attain success.

9. Self-reward ('Paritoshikam') : The word 'Paritoshikam' means reward, to give happiness, etc. A 'Sadhaka' needs encouragement from time to time. Just as we need to be punish us for our mistakes, so also when necessary, we have to give encouragement to ourselves. We must reward ourselves.

Refining our mind is the spiritual journey that we have undertaken, and it is evident only to us. Therein, there is none else to punish us or to reward us and there is none else to encourage us.

Our spiritual progress is a kind of inner maturity that our mind gains. The degree of maturity attained by our mind can not be easily understood by others. For example, as a result of many years of austerity we would have overcome negative qualities such as jealousy, by a small degree. This would appear to be a major achievement to us. But, the others would not be able to appreciate the improvement in maturity attained by us at all. In this situation, we will not get any reward or appreciation or laurel from the world. At such a time, there is none other than ourselves to encourage us. The point that we have to understand here is that others cannot know or understand our mental refinement and our achievement. Realising this, we must give up the expectation that others should encourage us.

The development of our mind is 'Swapratyaksham' (self-evident), it is a truth that only we are aware of. Seeing our spiritual progress, we would get encouragement and appreciation only from our 'Guru' and our fellow 'Sadhakas'. From the world, we will not get any kind of recognition. Further, the world will consider all our austerities and all our efforts as being useless and would tend to mock at us. In such a situation, by our own recognition of our progress, by self-encouragement, we must reward us for our

success. Only then could we pursue our further 'Sadhanas', with even greater enthusiasm.

The 'Sadhana' to be pursued to acquire a good value or to give up a negative quality takes a fairly long time. Thereby, we could develop a feeling of dejection that we are not progressing sufficiently. We might not yet have fully given up the negative quality, and we might not yet have acquired the virtue fully. Yet, we would have made some progress. In this condition, our mind would only be seeing the path that is yet to be traversed and not what we have already crossed. Our mind could feel dejected that we are not progressing sufficiently. Though on one hand we have some more distance to be covered, we should look back, see the progress that has been made, and must give encouragement to ourselves. For example, a person is taking effort over several years, to overcome the negative quality of getting angry. At the moment, he might not have fully given up the negative quality of anger. But as a result of his 'Sadhanas', he has been able to reduce both the intensity of anger and the duration, to an extent.

Instead of just seeing only the further progress to be made, from time to time, we should also see what has been achieved. We should give self-appreciation and pursue the 'Sadhana' with enthusiasm.

10. Seeking support ('Sahaya Anveshanam') : The term 'Sahayam' means assistance; 'Anveshanam'

means ‘to seek and take’. To pursue a virtue that we have taken as the goal, we should seek and find another value that will be of support.

It is not possible to attain any given virtue, alone and by itself. In order to attain that value, assistance of certain other values could be necessary. One should seek such other values that are of assistance and pursue the ‘Sadhanas’ with their support. For example, if we are pursuing the virtue of ‘not hurting others with our speech’, we need the assistance of the two values of ‘being careful’ and ‘limited speech’. Similarly, if we wish to pursue the ‘Sadhana’ of ‘Dhyana’ (meditation), we need discipline in both food and sleep.

Thus, every virtue is closely connected with certain other values. In order to pursue a given value, we must pursue it in association with other, connected values. Indeed, the very reason why we find ‘Dhyana’ as difficult is because we are not pursuing the associated disciplines.

The two sets of good values and evil qualities are interconnected within their own sets. Though each value should be pursued individually and separately, we need to pursue also the assisting set of values. For example, if a vocal musician desires to progress in his field, in addition to practice of singing, he also follows disciplines such as food discipline to protect his voice.

In a similar fashion, if we follow one negative quality, unknown to us, we would pick up other

negative qualities as well. So also, if we give up even one negative quality, other negative qualities would also be given up with it. A person, who decides to give up falsehood, cannot steal.

Thus, good values are interconnected like a chain (or spaghetti). When one is taken, invariably the others are also taken together with it. We must take the value that is our immediate goal, along with the other assisting good values, pursue them, and attain success.

11. Satvik Quality (‘Satva Guna’) : Our mind functions propelled by the three ‘Gunas’ (natures), namely ‘Satva Guna’, ‘Rajo Guna’ and ‘Tamo Guna’. When the mind is under the dominant influence of ‘Satva Guna’, it experiences peace and right knowledge. Under the influence of ‘Rajo Guna’ the mind experiences desire and orientation for activity. Under the influence of ‘Tamo Guna’ it experiences delusion, sloth, etc.

By the very nature, one or the other of the three ‘Gunas’ has predominant influence and propels the mind, in turns. When the influence of ‘Satva Guna’ becomes predominant, and the other two ‘Gunas’, (‘Raja Guna’ and ‘Tamo Guna’) are subservient, such mind is said to be ‘Satvik’.

Attaining virtues becomes easy only for a person who has acquired a ‘Satvik’ mind. For a person who

has either a ‘Rajasik’ or a ‘Tamasik’ mind, it is extremely difficult to acquire good values. Thereby, attaining a ‘Satvik’ mind is a basic requirement to acquire virtues. To change our mind to be ‘Satvik’, discipline is necessary in the quality and quantity of our food, and other basic habits. In all the aspects of daily life, we must behave with balance, and engage ourselves in the effort to make ‘Satva Guna’ dominant in our mind.

Only a mind that has attained ‘Satva guna’ will get the right knowledge about virtues, and by engaging in the appropriate ‘Sadhana’, it will lead us in the right path.

12. Prayer (‘Prarthana’) : ‘Prarthana’ is the prayer that we do to God. We can undertake such ‘Prarthana’ in three ways,

1. **As physical action, emanating from our body,**
2. **As vocal action, emanating through our speech, and**
3. **As mental action, emanating from our mind**

Every action has to produce a definite result. Prayer being of the nature of an action, there has to be a corresponding result. When we have faith in God

and when we pray with devotion to God, we would definitely get the due result. In prayer, our ego ('Ahamkaram') gets sublimated and we receive strength from God.

We need strength in proportion to the goal that we seek to achieve. It is possible to easily acquire worldly objects, with our monetary and physical strengths. But, it is not an easy task to remove the evil propensities in our mind and to acquire good qualities. When we have selected such a very difficult goal, we need commensurate strength to achieve it. We cannot get the necessary strength from external sources. It is only from the Almighty God ('Iswara') that we can get the required, great strength.

In all the stages, right from the initial stages till he attains the ultimate goal of 'Moksha', a 'Sadhaka' should surrender himself to God, derive the resultant strength, and pursue his 'Sadhanas'.

The advices given above are sufficient for attaining all the virtues. Understanding the nature of the virtue that we desire to acquire, we must engage in the right effort, and persist to acquire the same.

PART II

In the sections to come, we take few values as examples, and will briefly investigate aspects such as, the definition and nature of the values, the benefits that we derive from these values, the losses that we would incur if these values are not with us, and the type of efforts that we should undertake to acquire these values.

At first, we should observe our own mind and find out its positive and negative aspects.

Thereafter, we should prepare a list of virtues that we should acquire and a list of negative qualities that we should give up.

Taking one virtue at a time, we should investigate the nature of that virtue in detail, and then we should engage in the effort which is necessary for acquiring that value.

Even if the transformation of our mind happens at a relatively slower pace, with the support of right knowledge and right effort we would definitely attain a pure mind.

1

RESPONSIBILITY

To step into the path of maturity
One must shoulder responsibility.

God provides food for every bird,
but not in its nest.

While in the childhood, one does not have any responsibility. Responsibility is a value that one should develop along with one's physical growth. Indeed, it is the sense of responsibility that establishes that we have grown. Children observe the elders and have a dream that they too should become adults. They do not wish to continue to be children. The reason is that, in that stage, they do not have self-respect. The child respects only those who have responsibility.

Thus, only when we have the sense of responsibility would we be able to respect ourselves. If we do not have the sense of responsibility in us, then we would not have self-respect. As we do not give responsibility to the children, they do not have self-respect. Crossing the childhood is equivalent to developing responsibility. Moreover, people respect only those who have a sense of responsibility. Those without a sense responsibility cannot respect

themselves, nor can they can earn respect from others.

All the thoughts that arise in our mind do not have the ability to propel us into action. It is only when the sense of responsibility develops in our mind, could we function. Thus the ability to make us to act, vests with the sense of responsibility.

At every stage of our life, developing a sense of responsibility, in the duties that we have to perform at that stage, is a very important virtue to be acquired. Mere knowledge about what our duty is will not result in our engagement in the action that has to be performed to fulfill that duty. Only when we feel the sense of responsibility in that duty, could we function. Thus, just the knowledge as to what should be done and what should not be done would not yield the results. When the sense of responsibility combines with knowledge, we could perform what we should do and avoid what we should not do.

Self-responsibility

We should realise that we alone are solely responsible for improving us, in all possible ways. Our parents, teachers, friends, and relations could help in raising us, but only we have to elevate ourselves. In the same manner, none else could depress us. We raise ourselves, and we depress ourselves. As and when we feel such a self-responsibility, then alone have we grown mentally. Till such time, whatever might be our physical age, we remain to be ‘children’.

Let us study the different situations in which we

should have the sense of responsibility.

1. In actions that are to be done : At first, we should develop the sense of responsibility in the actions that we have to perform. The mere knowledge that we have to do a certain action will not engage us in performing that action. Only our sense of responsibility would give us the strength to act. Often times, though we are well aware of what our duties are, we do not perform them properly, as we do not feel the sense of responsibility.

2. In actions already done: We should feel that we alone are responsible, for all the actions that have been done by us. On many occasions, for our action in a particular manner, we tend to state that 'this person was responsible for my action' or that 'this situation was the reason why I acted so'. And we do not own-up responsibility for our actions. When we scuttle our responsibility in this manner, our progress gets hampered. Scuttling our responsibility is the same as blaming others. Further, at that time we lose the power to correct and transform ourselves.

Sense of responsibility gives us self-respect, and it also gives us the power to rectify our weaknesses.

When you blame others,
you give up your power to change yourself.

Blaming others is but scuttling the responsibility that we should take. And when we give up the sense of responsibility, we lose the power to function. In the

process, we are also losing the power to take efforts for our progress. Therefore, sense of responsibility becomes a very important factor for one's progress.

3. In actions left undone: Just as it is essential that we have to take responsibility for an action that we have done, so should we take the responsibility for failing to perform an action that we should have done.

> **You are responsible for what you have said,**
> **You are also responsible for what you have not said.**

When there are several duties in front of us, if we fail to perform them and give them up, for such non-performance of the duties, we must take the responsibility. If in a situation where we should have spoken, if we do not speak, for that lapse we become responsible. Thus, we have responsibility both for the actions that we have done, and for the actions that we should have done but which we failed to do. When we understand this principle, we will not attempt to give up our duties.

4. In others' responsibilities: Just as we have responsibility, each and every other person has responsibilities. Just as it is important for us to take responsibility in our duties, to the same extent it is important that we do not take responsibility in the duties of others. It is our responsibility that we do not take others' responsibility. Indeed, it would be wrong on our part to take on the duties of others. Due to affection to his son, a father might take the son's

responsibility. When he does so, the father himself becomes a hurdle for the son's development. A mother's responsibility should be left only to the mother. Thus, it becomes an important responsibility of ours not to take on others' responsibilities.

When we think of the sense of responsibility, we should investigate carefully and understand as to where we have responsibility and where we do not. Often, in situations where we do not have any responsibility, we imagine that we have responsibility, and engage ourselves in unnecessary actions. And we also end up with guilt complex that is not deserved. For example, it might be our responsibility to create a situation that gives happiness to others. But, entertaining and pleasing others is not our responsibility. None can give happiness to another person. Thus, realising that we do not have responsibility in the case of others' responsibility, and not taking such responsibility becomes our responsibility.

4. **In giving up responsibilities:** It is an important responsibility that we should give up responsibility, at the time and the place where we should give it up. Taking up a responsibility that is greater than our strength and capacity, and not giving up responsibility at the right time, are both incorrect. We observe many parents who fail to give responsibilities to their grown up sons.

Indeed, 'Sastra' permits a person to give up all his responsibilities, for the sake of his spiritual progress.

2

NON-VIOLENCE ('AHIMSA')

अहिंसा परमो धर्मः

"**Ahimsa Paramo Dharmaha"(Sanskrit),**
"Ahimsa (Non-violence) is the supreme virtue".

Among the many virtues that we should practice, 'Ahimsa' is the most important one.

'Ahimsa' is said to be a 'Maha vrata' (a great austerity).

'Ahimsa' means avoidance of hurt or non-violence.

The question then arises - "To whom should we not cause hurt?".

The answer is, 'It is avoidance of hurt both to us and to the others'.

1. We cause sorrow to ourselves.
2. We feel sorrow on account of others, and
3. We give sorrow to others.

Changing from such a situation, our not feeling sorrow in any manner; and our not giving sorrow to

others, is ‘Ahimsa’.

Normally, we tend to think that ‘Ahimsa’ refers only to our not causing sorrow to others. Indeed, ‘Ahimsa’ should commence with us. Our not feeling sorrow is also ‘Ahimsa’. Therefore, ‘Ahimsa’ encompasses both our not getting hurt, and we not hurting others.

‘Ahimsa Lakshanam’ (Definition of ‘Ahimsa’)

मनो वाक्कायकर्मभिः प्राणिपीठ - अनाचरणम्

“Mano vaak kaaya karmabhihi praani peeda anaacharanam” [Sanskrit]

Avoidance of hurt to living beings through actions emanating from mind, speech, or body.

We cause hurt to others with actions emanating from the three locations, namely, our body-speech-and mind; hurting others with limbs of our body; wounding others with our words; desiring in our mind that sorrow should befall others and cursing. Avoidance of such hurt due to our actions arising from these three sources is termed ‘Ahimsa’(Non-violence).

Need for ‘Ahimsa’

If we desire to improve ourselves and if we are to

succeed both in the worldly and the spiritual lives, the most important discipline that we have to practice is 'Ahimsa'. Many people mistakenly think that it is not possible to practice the value of 'Ahimsa'.

The experience of sorrow is an inescapable part of life. It is but natural that everyone has to perforce experience difficulties. At the time of our birth in this world, we arrive with tears. Indeed, the very first experience that this world gives us is one of sorrow.

Thereafter, we experience sorrow due reasons such as hunger, disease, and so on. In a house with children, we hear the peels of laughter at times and crying sounds sometimes. Sorrow is thus an unavoidable part of life. At times we observe that even while attempting to avoid sorrow, we experience even greater sorrow. Moreover, in nature's scheme we observe that for the survival of a living being, another being is required to die.

Such being the case, 'Where does 'Ahimsa' or non-violence fit in?" "Is it a virtue that could be practiced?" Having such doubts, some people conclude that 'Ahimsa' is not a discipline that could be practiced.

If one were to understand the nature of 'Ahimsa' with clarity, then it would be clearly understood that 'Ahimsa' is indeed a virtue that needs to be pursued, and that it can be practiced.

The natural, unavoidable difficulties that occur to

our physical body are not being referred to as 'Himsa' (Hurt). 'Himsa' is the sorrow that one causes to the others, due to reasons such as hatred, jealousy, anger, and the like. Wherever it is possible for one to avoid giving sorrow to another, such avoidance of giving sorrow is termed 'Ahimsa'. Giving punishment to others, with the intention of correcting them and for their welfare does not become 'Himsa'. Thus, the incidental pain that might be inflicted by the doctor to the patient; the punishment given by the teacher to the erring student, and the punishment given by the parents to their children, do not become 'Himsa'. Thereby, at first, one must understand clearly as to 'What is Himsa'? and 'What is Ahimsa'?

Our progress can not come from the tears of others. We are able to get elevated and rise, only when we bless the world, and when the world also blesses us.

'Swadhyayam' (Studying) is the most important 'Dharma' (duty) for the students. For the 'Grihastha' (the householder) 'Danam' (charity), 'Karma Yoga' (right action with the right attitude), etc., are the important duties. 'Ahimsa' is an important common value to be pursued by every one. However, it is the supreme most important 'Dharma' for persons, who having entered spiritual life are desirous of calming their minds, of attaining spiritual knowledge about the Ultimate, and of becoming free from all bondages.

To the extent we don't hurt others,

To that extent we don't get hurt.

While experiencing sorrow, the mind is disturbed and is without peace. In such a mind, there cannot be alignment and focus. If the mind is disturbed, the discriminatory faculty of the intellect would not function. Therefore, if our mind were to function as a proper instrument to uplift us, it should be free from sorrow, guilt complex, vacillation, confusion, and such other flaws. Then alone will the mind function as a good instrument for us. And our spiritual travel would also progress free of hurdles.

Therefore for 'Sadhakas' (spiritual aspirants), avoidance of hurt, to us and to others, is a very important value to be pursued.

To pursue the virtue of 'Ahimsa', the support of certain other good values must be taken. It is only with the help of such supportive values, could we pursue 'Ahimsa'. So also, to give up 'Himsa' (violence), we should give up certain evil qualities. Just as a single sling shot yields multiple fruits, when we take up the single value of 'Ahimsa', several good qualities come to us and several negative qualities leave us.

Causes for 'Himsa' (Violence)

If we were to pursue the value of 'Ahimsa', at first, we must identify the reasons due to which we continue to cause sorrow to others. Thereafter, by

removing those causes, we could practice 'Ahimsa'.

Now, let us see the reasons on account of which we cause sorrow to others. There are several reasons why we hurt us, and cause hurt to others. Among these, we will briefly see how we are causing 'Himsa' (hurt) due to reasons such as 1.Hatred 2.Anger 3.Jealousy 4.Revengeful attitude 5. to get a task done 6. Lack of attention and 7. Lack of culture.

1. Hatred: The feeling of hatred that develops in the mind is the main reason for 'Himsa' (violence). Hatred is a feeling that we ourselves cultivate in our mind. To start with, we will not generally have hatred against a person. When his actions or qualities are not acceptable to us, we develop hatred towards that person gradually. It is this hatred that becomes the reason for us to hurt them through our talk, through our physical actions, and through our mind. When hatred takes over the either teachers or parents intent on correcting a child, they would tend to give punishment that is excessive for the mistake committed. Such excessive punishment becomes 'Himsa' (Violence). Thus, punishment, per se, is not 'Himsa', but functioning under hatred is 'Himsa'.

When hatred manifests in our mind against a person, we realise that our mind is in a state of restlessness and pain. Hatred causes 'Himsa' to us to start with, and then only results in 'Himsa' (violence) to others. In all situations where others suffer violence on account of us, we are suffering to start with. Thus, we

are ourselves getting hurt, even while we hurt others.

2. Anger: When we come under the influence of anger, at that very instant we subject others to sorrow that is commensurate with the degree of our anger. Once our anger subsides, we feel sorry that we have hurt them. Even with people who are very close to us, while we are angry, we lose our control and hurt them. Just as we hurt those whom we hate, so also do we hurt those whom we like.

The negative quality called anger is an important reason for giving sorrow to us and to others.

3. Jealousy: Like cancer, jealousy tends to be present in us, without our being aware. Jealousy is a despicable feeling. A mind that is unable to accept other's growth, engages in scheming and violence. Without rejoicing with whatever we may have, we tend to contemplate on what we do not have, and feel sorry. Thereafter, noticing what others have, we feel jealousy and cause 'Himsa' to them. When jealousy sprouts in the mind, instantaneously sorrow also sprouts. King Duryodhana lived all through his life in a palace and Pandavas happened to live in the forest for several years. Yet it was Duryodhana who experienced maximum sorrow in life. The reason was the jealousy that was in him.

Indeed, attempting to kindle jealousy in others' minds is also a kind of 'Himsa' (violence). When we acquire a new object, we not only show it to our neighbours, but also highlight the fact that they do not have that item. As a result of this, the feeling of jealousy sprouts in them. If we have money or knowledge and

such other forms of wealth, show-casing it cultivates jealousy in the people around us. Such behaviour is also 'Himsa'. Thus, our feeling jealous, and our instigating others to feel jealous are both 'Himsa' (violence).

Besides hurting both others and ourselves, jealousy prevents us from experiencing what we have gained, just like Duryodhana who was lying on the most comfortable bed in the palace but was fuming thinking about Pandavas who were blissfully sleeping in the forest. Thus, jealousy becomes an important reason for 'Himsa' (violence).

4. Revengeful Attitude: When some one causes sorrow to us, that sorrow instigates in us a revengeful attitude that we should cause greater sorrow to them than what we had experienced. That is, it is the sorrow that we had experienced that becomes the seed for the sorrow that we inflict. Therefore, when we protect ourselves without feeling sorrow, we would not attempt to hurt others.

You give what you get.

When a clan of people enslaves another clan and subjects them to sorrow, the victim and suffering group thinks that the policy of seeking revenge is just and is a matter of sacrifice, and it indulges in destructive actions. If an individual had faced excessive sorrow in his childhood on account of his parents, the society, economic conditions, or such other reasons, only violence ('Himsa') will be residing

in his mind.

Instead of highlighting the greatness of forgiveness, the society too projects the pursuit of revenge as a symbol of success. The core theme of many films happens to be this ‘tit for tat’ or ‘eye for the eye’ attitude. The external environment is sowing such thoughts as, “If I am attacked, and if I attack them in the same manner, then I am a successful person”. It is being projected that forgiving attitude is weakness, and that attack in return for an attack is a heroic deed. “If one wounds us by his words, in equal measure we should hurt him by our retort. Then alone will our mind get solace”. Such a thought process is the reason for our ‘Himsa’ (violence).

If a person continues to hurt others, it means that the sorrow (hurt) that he had experienced at some point of time earlier has got lodged in his subconscious mind. And his mind thinks that only when revenge is taken, the scores would be settled. A person who harms the society today would definitely be one who has been affected in someway in the past. Such a person could only be reformed by affection.

Indeed, when we take revenge on others, truly we are becoming the victims.

5. For the sake of getting a task done: We are often employing ‘Himsa’ (violence) to get our desired tasks performed. Having given a task to our subordinates, when they either delay the task or when they do not perform it correctly, we make it a habit to attack them

with harsh words and hurt them. In the villages (of India), to get the bullock carts go fast, the bullocks are subjected to 'Himsa'. When children resist adamantly, in matters such as taking food, parents create fear in their minds to achieve the results. Creating fear in others' minds is indeed a great violence. In this manner, for the sake of getting our task done, we are using 'Himsa' as an instrument.

6. Lack of attention: On many occasions, just due to our lack of attention, others get hurt. In particular, our words cause sorrow to many. Indeed, it might not be our intention to hurt. Yet, others would have felt hurt. The reason for this is our lack of attention. At times, we might use some words in a casual or playful manner. Those words might hurt others' minds. Hence, one has to handle one's words carefully. When we don't do so, such words cease to be instruments for communication and exchange of ideas, instead they become weapons to wound others' minds.

7. Lack of Culture: Culture is orderly social behaviour or manners. While in public, order is necessary in our dress, behaviour, way of speech, etc. Culture is essential in all aspects including keeping our dress clean, wearing dress properly, keeping our body clean, and eating manners. The manner, in which we speak in public and words that we employ, should be civilised.

For example, a boy might have lost his father. We notice that some uncivilised persons pointing out to such a child 'as one who has swallowed his father'. So also, we see uncivilised people hurting the sentiments

of others using words such as ‘blind fellow’ while hailing a person who is visually challenged, ‘deaf fellow’ while hailing a person who is hard of hearing, and ‘lame fellow’ to address a handicapped person without legs. It is ‘Himsa’ (violence) meted out to the person who has a physical handicap, to address him mentioning that handicap, to talk derisively, or to name him mentioning that handicap. Those who point out the handicap of others, thinking that it is fun or humour, and those who speak insultingly of others without realising the extent of 'Himsa’ (hurt) that they are inflicting, are indeed uncivilised people.

Thus, we can identify many reasons for our causing ‘Himsa’ to others. In the above, we have seen only a few general reasons. By introspection, we can find out few more reasons for the ‘Himsa’ that we inflict. If we were to remove such reasons, we would cease to cause sorrow to others. The result would be that ‘we would not feel sorrow’; and ‘our mind would function as a good companion to us’.

Let us now investigate the consequences of ‘Himsa’.

Consequences of ‘Himsa’ (Violence)

From the stand point of ‘Dharma Sastra’ (Code of Ethics), causing ‘Himsa’ to others gives a person ‘Papam’ (sin/ demerit) as the result. The consequence of such ‘Papam’ (demerit) is sorrow. The ‘Papam’ acquired through physical actions affects one’s body.

The 'Papam' resulting from one's speech would result in the person getting hurt by others' words. The 'Papam' caused by one's mind (thoughts) would affect the person's mind.

It is only the sorrow that we inflict on others that returns back to us. Therefore, if we wish to be free from sorrow, we should not inflict sorrow on others.

The good that we do to others give us the result of 'Punyam' (merit), and the harm that we cause to others gives us the result of 'Papam' (demerit). 'Punyam' gives us happiness and also results in our progress in spiritual life.

In our experience also, we observe that to whomever we cause sorrow, we face enmity from them. They too would be waiting for an occasion to give us sorrow. Thereby, if we were to transform the people around us into our enemies, what else can we have in our mind except fear!

Moreover, when we hate a person and cause sorrow to him, there would only be lack of peace in our mind. We would also be feeling sorry, one way or the other. Such a sorrowful mind would be a restless mind. Such a restless mind is not an appropriate instrument for spiritual practice.

If we continue to cause 'Himsa' to others, our mind would lose its sensitivity. A mind without sensitivity cannot realise subtle truths. Mind development is only to make the mind to be both steadfast and sensitive.

Engaging in 'Himsa' (violence) would inhibit such mind development. This is a great truth realised from the experience of those who have attained developed minds.

Techniques to follow 'Ahimsa' (Non-violence)

In order to pursue the virtue of 'Ahimsa', the support of certain other values is necessary. Just as discipline is essential in aspects such as food, sleep, and activities, for 'Dhyanam'(meditation) to fructify, so also, discipline is necessary in the case of 'Ahimsa'.

There are several methods to pursue 'Ahimsa'. Among them, we will briefly discuss techniques such as

- **i. 'Sankalpam' (Vow or Resolve)**
- **ii. Removal of hatred**
- **iii. Giving up Anger**
- **iv. Removal of jealousy**
- **v. Forgiveness**
- **vi. Control of speech (restraint in speech)**
- **vii.'Karuna' (Kindness)**
- **viii.Removal of Untouchability**
- **ix. Avoiding meat eating**
- **x. Protecting oneself**
- **xi. 'Prarthana' (Prayer), and**
- **xii.'Jnanam' (Knowledge).**

1. Sankalpam (Vow /Resolve): To imbibe any virtue as our own, we must first take a vow (or resolve) in our

mind that we should attain it without fail. That virtue should become our 'Lakshyam' (Goal/ Aim). Whatever becomes our 'Goal', thoughts about that goal would always be in our mind. So, in order to think about something always, it should be made our goal. Taking a 'Sankalpam' (resolve) means, 'thinking about the same item incessantly'. When "pursuing the value of Ahimsa" becomes our goal, thoughts about that value would always be arising in our mind. And whatever our mind repeatedly thinks about, we would attain that goal very soon. Indeed, our mind would itself search for ways and means to attain the virtue and would engage us in necessary action. Just as small drops of water together make a mighty flood, when we repeatedly think about the same object our thought gets strength. Such strength would get us engaged in necessary efforts, and whatever be the hurdles, they would be surmounted. To acquire the strength in the resolve of following 'Ahimsa', we should realise the need for 'Ahimsa' and its greatness, in our intellect.

What you do to others, you do to yourself.

If we harm others, indeed, we are only harming ourselves. When we inflict sorrow on others, indeed, we are giving sorrow to us. When we love others, indeed we love ourselves. We can notice that when we shower affection on others, there is joy in our mind; and when hatred sprouts in our mind, we experience irritation. That is, whichever emotion we might direct at others, at first, without our being aware that emotion is directed at ourselves. It is only later that that emotion reaches the others. Therefore, if we do not wish to feel sorrow,

we should not hurt others. If we realise this truth, 'Ahimsa' would definitely become our goal.

To attain whatever virtue, 'Sankalpam' is essential. So, the first technique to attain 'Ahimsa' is to keep 'Ahimsa' as our goal, and to incessantly repeat the thought flow in our mind that 'we should pursue Ahimsa".

2. Removal of Hatred: It is only when we remove the feeling of hatred from our mind, that we could free ourselves from 'Himsa'. Generally, we cultivate the feeling of hatred upon one who commits mistakes; one who gives us sorrow, and one who hurts our beloved. We have to understand a subtle point here. We could dislike the wrong action or wrong character of an individual. But, we should not hate that person. He is different, his actions or character is different. In a cinema, we do not hate the person who plays the role of the villain; we dislike the action that emanates from him and the character that he portrays. Thereby, the person different; and the action that emanates from him is different. If this is understood, it would be clear that no one deserves to be hated. All the same, it is good to keep away from people with evil actions and bad character.

Evil is different, and bad people are different. No one is a bad person. Even he might undergo transformation, is it not! Indeed, there is no evil person at all; there could only be evil. Thereby, it is not necessary to hate those who do evil actions. One

should learn to see a person with bad character and negative actions, as a mentally sick person. One need not hate a sick person; one should give him the treatment that he needs. Even if such a treatment (-that is punishment-) gives him sorrow, it does not tantamount to 'Himsa'. If instead, we cultivate hatred in our mind against that person, it results in 'Himsa' to us and 'Himsa' to the other person. In the initial stages of our spiritual sojourn, we might tend to hate evil actions; but we do not have to continue to hate the persons with bad character always. Upon our acquiring mental maturity, we would not hate anything. In this manner, as we gradually remove hatred bit by bit from our mind, we would also be freed from 'Himsa'.

3. Giving up Anger: That it is difficult to pursue 'Ahimsa', would be evident from the statement that 'one should give up anger'. If we were to merely tell some one some five times, "Please don't get angry", that person would surely be provoked to get angry. Thus for most people, 'to get angry' has become their very nature. To acquire the virtue of 'Ahimsa', the negative quality of anger has to be definitely given up. And we saw that if we cultivate just the one value of 'Ahimsa', several other values would come to us along with it. If serious effort is taken, there is nothing that cannot be achieved. As the habit of getting angry is reduced, one gets freedom from 'Himsa'. Anger is comparable to the acid. Acid first destroys the container where it is held, and only thereafter the items that are put into it. So also, anger causes 'Himsa' at first to the person who gets angry; and later to the

person at whom the anger is directed. Anger is said to 'a destroyer of its associates', just like a piece of wood which burns itself and burns also those have associated with it. While under the influence of anger, we cause sorrow to those with whom we are attached, and we too feel sorrow later.

Therefore, we must practice to give up anger, which is responsible for such emotions as guilt feeling, enmity, 'Papam' (sin), and 'Himsa'.

4. Removal of Jealousy: A mind that feels happy to see others' success becomes divine. We should practice to be contented with what we have. A Tamil proverb states, "a mind that is content with what one has is an alchemical (it can convert what it touches to gold)". Only one who removes jealousy that is in his mind, could get rid of evil tendency. Based one's effort and 'Karma phalam' (result of his past actions), the present life and comforts in it result. We have certain types of wealth. Others have certain other types of wealth. Wealth, knowledge, beauty, and various types of skills, are not all with all the persons. We must feel contented with whatever we have and must learn to be happy. And we should give up the habit of comparing ourselves with others. It is because of such comparison that jealousy develops. If magnanimity develops in us, we will see and appreciate whatever wealth the others might have. Whatever we deserve to get, such wealth Bhagawan has given us. Whatever we do not deserve to get, Bhagawan has denied us such wealth. If we attain something that we don't deserve, it would only lead to our destruction and not

to our uplift. That is why in the 'Upanishadic' prayer for wealth one prays,

> ततो मे श्रियं आवह
>
> "thatho me Sriyam aavaha"(Sanskrit)
>
> "Thereafter, may I be blessed with wealth"

The prayer states that "upon getting sufficient mental maturity, may I be blessed with wealth". When one does not have adequate maturity, if wealth, power, position, fame, and the like come, they would destroy him very soon. We should understand the secret that Bhagawan has indeed protected us by not giving us certain types of wealth. That is why a 'Thanks giving prayer' reads thus.

> "O Bhagawan! I express my gratitude to you once, for whatever you have given me.
> And O Bhagawan! For whatever you have refused to give me, I am grateful manifold".

To be able to receive the wealth of Bhagawan's grace, it is indeed a boon not to have material wealth!

If we realise that not having certain types of wealth is for our good only, then where is the occasion for jealousy and sense of deprivation!

One must practice to remove jealousy through proper thought and analysis. As we remove jealousy

steadily from our mind, we would also feel happy. And those who are dependent on us would also be happy.

5. Forgiveness: It is our normal habit to inflict sorrow upon those who cause sorrow to us. Such revengeful attitude is the chief cause for 'Himsa' (violence). If we practice to forgive people who inflict sorrow to us, we could give up 'Himsa'. It is wrong to consider forgiveness as a sign of weakness or cowardice. Indeed, great strength is required to be able to forgive. Forgiveness is true success. While forgiving, the first beneficiary is us only. Feelings such as hatred, enmity, and anger get removed and our mind experiences peace. Let us assume that some one has caused us harm. When it is said that we should forgive him, the intention is not to accept and approve his action as right. What he did was indeed wrong only. He would face the appropriate punishment for his action inevitably. That is nature's law.

When we seek to take revenge, we get affected in two ways. The first time we got affected was when he caused harm to us. And when we retaliate and harm him, we are committing the same mistake that he did and we get affected a second time, acquiring 'Papam' and sorrow.

When someone steals from us, if we retaliate and kill him, the affectation comes to us. But if a police officer does it, it is not 'Adharma'. Thus, forgiving results in good to us, to start with. Giving appropriate punishment to the culprit is 'Dharma'. Even while issuing the punishment, the attitude of forgiveness should be pursued in our heart. Just as we feel mentally

peaceful, when another pardons our mistake, so also, others would feel happy when we forgive them for their mistakes. And we too experience happiness. When some one causes us hurt, if we understand his ignorance, incapacity, feeling of hurt, etc., we would be in a position to forgive him. When we accumulate the sorrows given by this world to us, our mental burden keeps on increasing more and more. In order that our mind becomes lighter, we should practice to forgive.

In the initial stages, forgiveness would appear to be a kind of sacrifice on our part. Truly speaking, to forgive is to rectify our own mistake of foisting blame on another person. We have mentally blamed another person for having given us a difficulty. Forgiveness is our act of rectification for that blame. In reality, no one can give sorrow to another. Due to our ignorance, incapacity, and lack of maturity in the mind, we point at some as being the cause and we have experienced sorrow. If we have cultivated maturity of mind, who ever can have the strength to hurt us? If we are feeling hurt, is not the flaw in our mind only?

Forgiveness is but withdrawing the blame that we had foisted. Though this concept may not be understood initially, to start with let us think that forgiveness is an act of sacrifice on our part, and start practicing it. Let us lighten our mental burden; let us give up 'Himsa'.

6. Restraint in Speech: Restraint in speech is disciplining of our speech, regulating the words that come forth from us. We experience sorrow and give

sorrow to others, through our talk only. Words are being used as weapons. A Tamil proverb states, 'The wound caused by words would not heal easily'. It is through speech that most of the 'Himsa' is being inflicted on others. When the speech is regulated, 'Himsa' reduces by a great degree. Thinking that we are being truthful, if we speak whatever strikes in our mind, such talk would give sorrow to many. Words are like sharp weapons. Only one who gets attacked by a weapon can feel the pain. If we are careless in the use of our words, many would get victimised.

Some may think, 'After all, we are only speaking the truth or fact'. But, such truth should be told in a gentle manner. If indeed, there is no gentleness in the expression of truth, the value of such truth diminishes. While pointing out someone's fault, though there is truth in our statement, if there is no gentleness in the manner of pointing out, only harm would result instead of good. We should practice to present the truth in a gentle manner, such that the others' mind is prepared to receive and accept it. If others do not have the capacity to digest the truth, hiding such a truth is also 'Ahimsa'. This is comparable to the case of the doctor, who knows when to inform about the disease to the patient, depending on the latter's mental state.

Every one likes to talk, but those who listen are too few. As one listens more and more, one's wisdom and mental maturity grow. As one speaks more and more, wisdom and mental strength decrease. 'Not speaking more than required' is by itself 'Ahimsa'. When we are silent, others do not have the problem of

having to listen to us. When we are silent, many escape from our sharp, arrow-like words. Therefore, our silence becomes 'Ahimsa'. And abiding in silence becomes a 'Maha-vratam'(great austerity).

The reason for most relationships to break, is the careless usage of words. Sri Adi Sankara had said that only those who have self control could follow 'Ahimsa'. It is not just our speech, but all other senses should as well be disciplined. Then only could we practice 'Ahimsa'. The manner in which we see could hurt others, blaming others, throwing objects, and such mistakes, are the result of a lack of sense control. By controlling our speech, we could protect ourselves and others. Thus, to protect all, may we practice being silent.

7. 'Karuna' (Kindness): When 'Karuna' (kindness) and affection develop in the mind, 'Himsa' disappears. 'Karuna' is a feeling mixed with affection that we develop towards other living beings. In the words of Saint Vallalar who said, "I feel sorry seeing the crops that have dried for want of water", the gentleness and sensitivity of his mind are evident. 'Karuna' is a feeling that we spontaneously develop seeing people who are suffering. Giving up thoughts such as, "It is the consequence of their 'Papam' (evil actions); they have to suffer in this manner only; they deserve it", etc., we should feel 'Karuna' (empathy/ kindness) in our mind. Such a feeling of 'Karuna' will protect us from evil thoughts such as cursing others in

our mind, and desiring that evil befall others. 'Vedantic' teachings such as, "The world is just an appearance, it is 'Maya'(illusion)" are not meant to take away the feeling of 'Karuna' from our mind. Indeed, to be able to understand 'Vedanta', the mind should be the repository of compassion and 'Karuna'. It is in such a mind other virtues such as 'Tyaga'(sense of sacrifice), and 'Vairagya' (lack of attachment to 'Bhoga' or pleasures) develop; intellect becomes sharper, and we would acquire the capacity to understand subtler concepts. Acquiring 'Vairagya' (detachment) is not giving up 'Karuna' and compassion in our minds. The prime teaching ('Upadesam') of 'Vedanta' is that "you should see yourself in all living beings ('Jiva rasis'). Only when one has 'Karuna' in the mind, could one realise others sorrow as one's own.

If stale and spoiled food items are not fit for our consumption, then they are not suited to other people as well. Giving such food to the poor people who serve in our house becomes 'Himsa'.

Whatever we do to ourselves, same should be done to others. To be able to behave in this manner, we should cultivate 'Karuna'(empathy/ kindness) and compassion.

8. Eradication of Untouchability: Untouchability is a serous disease that has a strangle hold on the human race. All our physical bodies are but combinations of

the five elements ('Pancha bhutas'); they have grown to the present state due to the food that has been partaken; and all of them are all going to end up as food for other life forms. Such being the case, creating an imaginary, artificial difference based on one's birth, and to segregate one as an untouchable becomes 'Himsa'. There might be some reason, if one is considered to be inferior on the basis of one's character and qualities. But, to consider one as inferior based of an artificial consideration called caste is 'Himsa'.

Thus, in order to follow 'Ahimsa', one should give up attachment to caste and become free from the negative feeling of untouchability.

9. Avoiding meat eating: Avoiding non-vegetarian food leads to 'Ahimsa'. Killing animal bodies in order to grow our, human body becomes 'Himsa'. We might get a doubt at this stage. "Even, when one takes vegetarian food, the bodies of trees, creepers, vegetables, and fruits are being destroyed. Plants are also living beings. In this case also killing of living beings is not being avoided. Such being the case, how does killing of animal bodies alone tantamount to 'Himsa'?"

In our life situations arise, at times, when we have to perforce select one among two difficult alternatives. And we too select the alternative that results in lesser damage or difficulty. For example, when we are affected by sickness, we have the situation of having to take some medicines and get cured. If we don't take

the medicine, the effect would be major. But, when we take the medicine, we are affected by the side effects. Between these alternatives, we opt for the alternative of taking the medicines, despite having to experience the side effects. Otherwise, we would be affected to a greater extent.

In a similar manner, the 'Himsa' caused to the plants when we take vegetarian food is of a lesser degree than the 'Himsa' caused to animals if we were to take non-vegetarian food. When we kill the animals, they feel great pain and sorrow. Plants, whose organs are less developed, do not experience and express such pain. Thereby, opting for a lesser 'Himsa' between the two unavoidable 'Himsas' becomes 'Ahimsa'. We are able to perceive the sorrow and pain of animals. Plants do not experience pain and sorrow to that extent.

Like humans, animals have five sensory organs, namely, body (touch), mouth (taste), eyes (sight), nose (smell) and ears (sound). Beings such as snake have four senses. Certain other living beings have three or two senses. Plants have only a single sense. As the number of senses increase, the experience of pleasure and pain increases. When we use plants that have only a single sense as our food, the inflicted pain and sorrow is lower. If we were to take the bodies of animals, which have five senses like us, as our food the sorrow and pain which are inflicted are maximum.

Moreover, human body could survive and live well with just vegetarian food. When the possibility to

be able to live with just vegetarian food is available, utilising such an opportunity is 'Ahimsa'. Animals such as the lion and the tiger have not been given the opportunity or choice of surviving with vegetarian food. Such wild animals do not acquire sin ('Papam') by their taking meat.

Animals such as goats and cows are created such that they could take only vegetarian food. They do not opt for vegetarian food by their choice. Thereby, they do not acquire 'Punyam' by taking vegetarian food. But, man has been given the choice or free-will to do either 'Punyam' or 'Papam'. Avoiding 'Papam' is indeed 'Ahimsa'.

Thus, avoiding non-vegetarian food is pursuing 'Ahimsa'.

10. Self protection: We should all practice to be in the path of 'Dharma'. Thus, while we are living as per 'Dharma', if someone attempts to give sorrow to us in an 'Adharmic' manner, it is only 'Ahimsa' to protect ourselves. Self protection is not selfishness; self protection is indeed protection of 'Dharma' only.

The following is a well known story: A certain snake was harming many people. A sage, who was passing by, advised the snake to abide by 'Ahimsa' and to not harm anyone; and he went away. Noticing that the snake has become harmless and calm, the children of the village started pelting stones at the snake and teasing it. When the sage happened to pass

by after a while, he saw that the snake was seriously bruised and experiencing great pain and sorrow. And he enquired as to how the snake came to such a state. The snake replied that it was the result of its following 'Ahimsa', as advised by the sage. The sage then clarified, "I had only asked you not to harm; I did not ask you not to hiss". When the children of the village saw the snake hiss, they avoided going near it any further.

In the 'Vedic' injunction, "Do not inflict sorrow on anyone", the word 'anyone' includes us also. Protecting ourselves from the attack of others, like protecting others, is 'Ahimsa' only.

11. 'Prarthana' (Prayer) : Praying to 'Iswara' is 'Prarthana'. In the present context, 'Prarthana' is to pray to 'Iswara' thus, "May I be able to pursue Ahimsa", and to seek the virtue of 'Ahimsa'.

A poor man, who does not have the means to earn money, seeks food as alms and gets it. Begging is the lowest state that befalls one who is in poverty. The beggar gives up his self respect totally. When we pray to, and beg from 'Iswara', our arrogance is also given up; we then become a devotee ('Bhakta').

Devotees beg and pray to 'Iswara' for multifarious things. Here, we are begging for the virtue of 'Ahimsa'.

Why should we beg? Just as one who is unable

to earn a living begs for his food, we are also without sufficient strength to be able to pursue 'Ahimsa'. When we realise our lack of strength to pursue 'Ahimsa', we approach 'Bhagawan' to get the strength. Just like 'Sugriva' who sought the help and strength of Sri Rama to win over 'Vali', if we pray to 'Iswara' whom we worship, we would be blessed with the strength to pursue 'Ahimsa'.

For any 'Karma' (action) there would definitely be the due 'Phalam' (result). 'Prarthana' is a 'Karma' (action). Therefore, when we pray, we would get the appropriate result. The extent to which our prayer is sincere, faithful, strong and heart-felt, commensurate with that would be the result that we get.

'Prarthana' is the most ideal way to achieve whatever we may want to attain in life. Let us pray to 'Bhagawan' to be able to pursue 'Ahimsa'.

12. Knowledge: Pursuing 'Ahimsa' with 'Jnanam' (Knowledge) is possible for 'Jnanis' (wise people). In this context, what is referred to as 'Jnanam' (knowledge) is 'Atma Jnanam' (Self-knowledge) or 'Brahma Jnanam' or 'Knowledge of the Absolute Truth'. Those who have attained 'Atma Jnanam' (Self-knowledge) would pursue 'Ahimsa' totally. The knowledge that they have acquired is the true answer to the question, "Who am I?". One who has realised 'who he is', sees 'oneself', in all the living beings. Those

who are ignorant (of 'Atma Jnanam'), think that they see themselves, only when they look into a mirror. But, the 'Jnani' (who has understood 'Self knowledge') realises that whatever he sees upon opening his eyes, is only 'himself'! As the 'Jnani' realises that 'he is as all the living beings', to whom could he cause hurt! Bhagawan Sri Krishna states in Bhagawad Gita that he ('Jnani') cannot hurt himself as well.

न हिनस्ति आत्मना आत्मानं

"Na hinasti atmanaa atmaanam"[Sanskrit]

He does not inflict sorrow on himself.

For one who has achieved the control of his senses and control of his mind, and has acquired 'Atma Jnanam' (Self-knowledge), pursuing 'Ahimsa' becomes an easy and natural task.

In the above, we briefly saw some reasons for 'Himsa', and a few techniques to pursue 'Ahimsa'.

People are inflicting 'Himsa' due to manifold reasons. Each person could have a specific reason. Therefore, we should investigate and find out the reason on account of which we are giving sorrow to others, and should remove that reason. For example, the main reason as to why Duryodhana caused 'Himsa' to Pandavas was jealousy. 'Kama' (Desire) was the reason for the 'Himsa' caused by Ravana.

The reason for 'Himsa' by Hiranya Kasipu was 'Garvam' (arrogance). Some kings indulge in actions of 'Himsa' such the hunting of animals as a pastime. 'Himsa' had thus become a pastime for some people. One should investigate the reason for one's own 'Himsa' of others, remove that reason, and thus pursue 'Ahimsa'.

When 'Himsa' becomes 'Ahimsa'

In this study of 'Ahimsa', we should understand another important point; in certain situations, "Himsa is indeed Ahimsa".

People mistakenly think that, 'Ahimsa' cannot be pursued by people living in the society; and that it could only be followed those who have renounced living in the society.

In a situation when a police officer has to shoot and kill a criminal who is destroying the society, if the officer were to shoot and kill that person, he is only pursuing 'Ahimsa' eminently. By killing an evil person, the police officer has saved the lives of many people. Indeed, killing such an evil person is good for that person, and is for the good of the others (society) as well. In this case, 'Himsa' itself is becoming 'Ahimsa'. On the other hand, if the police officer were to leave the criminal, it would become 'Himsa'. The common man doesn't have the right to punish a criminal; it is a crime if a citizen were to attack a criminal. Only the

police officer has the right to punish criminals. That right itself is his duty. When he performs his duty, the 'Himsa' that is incidental becomes 'Ahimsa'. Similarly, the punishment given by a judge to a criminal is also an act of 'Ahimsa'.

If 'Ahimsa' is misunderstood and pursued, it would result in 'Himsa' of great magnitude. If a person is acquiring wealth in an illegal manner, or if a person kills others or engages in violence in pursuit of a wrong ideology, the society could function properly only if such a person is given the due punishment, but with compassion and without hatred. Such a punishment might even be the death sentence. The removal of the physical body from the erring person is comparable to the removal of a weapon from an attacking person.

A judge delivered a sentence thus, "I award you the death sentence. May your soul attain peace; I pray to God to give you a good path".

In this instance, there is no hatred; there is no intention to seek revenge. Yet, 'Himsa' is happening. Such a 'Himsa' is indeed 'Ahimsa'.
'Dharma sastra' states thus,

> "With a view to save our body, if one limb were to be removed, that is 'Ahimsa'. To save a family, an individual could be sacrificed. To save a village, a family could be sacrificed. To save a district, a village could be sacrificed. To

save a country, a district could be sacrificed. And to save the world, a country could be sacrificed.

To discipline our faculties such as our mind, eyes, and tongue, we have to engage in 'Tapas' (austerities) of different types. The very meaning of 'Tapas' is 'to melt'. Subjecting ourselves to austerities is 'Himsa', indeed. Yet, it becomes 'Ahimsa'. If we are without any kind of self control or discipline, we would subject us and others to 'Himsa' on account of reasons such as jealousy, desire ('Kama'), and anger. The lesser order of 'Himsa' that we experience saves us from inflicting greater order of 'Himsa' on us and others. Thereby, 'Tapas' (austerities) that we wisely undertake to purify ourselves is 'Ahimsa'.

Some people engage themselves in 'Rajasic', 'Tamasic', and very harsh and self-destructive 'Tapas', such as what was performed by the 'Asuras' (demonic persons in the 'Puranas'). Such 'Tapas' would not qualify to be called 'Ahimsa'. Those who engage themselves in such wrong austerities, experience 'Himsa' themselves, and give 'Himsa' to others. Indeed, the lives of 'Asuras' are examples for this.

In this manner, we should correctly understand the type of 'Himsa' that becomes 'Ahimsa'. In several places in Bhagawad Gita, Bhagawan Sri Krishna

stresses the need for 'Ahimsa' and advocates it. And yet, the locale where 'Ahimsa' was advocated was the war field! When one acts to rectify children, to correct students, or to punish criminals, some 'Himsa' is bound to result. In such situations, if one mistakenly desires to avoid such incidental 'Himsa', desires to pursue 'Ahimsa', and thereby forsakes performing his duty, such a pursuit of 'Ahimsa' would become 'Himsa'. In the process of avoiding a lower degree of 'Himsa', 'Himsa' of a larger magnitude would result. With a view to avoid the larger magnitude of 'Himsa', if one acts and it results in a lesser degree of 'Himsa', such 'Himsa' does not tantamount to 'Himsa'.

Now, let us study the benefits that accrue, as a result of an intelligent understanding of the true nature of 'Ahimsa' and due to its pursuit.

'Ahimsa phalam' (Benefits of 'Ahimsa')

The benefits that accrue due to the pursuit of 'Ahimsa' are incomparable. To pursue 'Ahimsa', the support of certain other values is necessary. Thereby, in our pursuit of 'Ahimsa', we acquire these other virtues.

A mind that is filled with good qualities is said to be a pure mind. Mental purity alone gives us happiness. Further, purity of mind is essential in order to attain 'Moksham' (Liberation). 'Vratam' (austerity) gives us good health; but overdoing the austerities would reduce the physical strength. So also, when

sorrow affects our mind beyond limits, our mind loses its strength. Only if the body and the mind have sufficient strength, could we attain the goal of life. Through 'Ahimsa', we get both physical and mental strengths.

The capacity of discrimination ('Viveka Sakti') would manifest only in a mind that is steady and pure. 'Viveka Sakti' is an intellectual ability; it comprises the ability to distinguish that which is true from that which is just an appearance, and the ability to be firmly established in the truth. Discrimination is to know the difference rationally, and being established is to confirm the decision. When 'Viveka Sakti' (the ability to discriminate) is deluded by the impurities in the mind, the quality of our life would be low. When we practice 'Ahimsa', our 'Viveka Sakti' develops, mind would become sensitive, it acquires steadiness, and it would become a vehicle suitable for spiritual journey.

We do not have to wait for long, to attain the beneficial results of 'Ahimsa'. They are attained instantaneously. When a 'Yaga'(Vedic ritual) is performed, one would not know when the result, namely 'Punyam', would be experienced. But when we practice 'Ahimsa', 'Papam' is removed and 'Punyam' is acquired. Thereby, we get purity of mind and a happy state of mind immediately. According to 'Yoga Sastras', 'Ahimsa' would result in far greater benefits than many other 'Sadhanas'. It is said that one gets immediate 'Phalam' right here, and also gets eligibility to higher 'Lokas' (worlds). Through the pursuit

of ‘Ahimsa’, it is not our (spiritual seekers’) intention to acquire ‘Siddhis’ (Yogic powers) or to go to superior ‘Lokas’, after our death. Our aim is, to acquire mental purity and ‘Self knowledge’ (‘Tatva Jnanam’), and getting ‘Mukti’ (Liberation), in the current life itself.

When we pursue ‘Ahimsa’ and protect others, we are also protecting ourselves. A ‘Jiva’ (living being) is nor born just for the sake of dying; it is born to live. The next question that arises is, “What type of life is he is going to live?”

A meaningful life is one where one is happy, and one gives happiness to others. Thus, ‘Ahimsa’ fulfills the true meaning to one’s life.

To the extent you love yourself,
To that extent you love others.

This is a general rule. On the basis of our understanding of ourselves, and on the basis of the experiences recorded in our mind, we are interacting with others. Impressions of whatever we have experienced would only be residing in our mind. It is on the basis of these impressions (called ‘Vasanas’) that our nature (or character) is formed. And we function on the basis of our nature. The manner in which we treat the world, depends on the manner in which we treat ourselves, and the manner in which the world had treated us.

If we are loved, we love,

If we are protected, we protect,
If we are forgiven, we forgive,
If we are accepted, we accept, and
If we are subjected to 'Himsa', we do
'Himsa' to others.

Thereby, if we have experienced sorrow either on account of us, or on account of others, we would give sorrow to the others. In order that we may not give sorrow to others, we should not have experienced sorrow in any manner. Indeed,

'Ahimsa' is 'our not experiencing sorrow', and 'our not giving sorrow to others'.

3

TRUTHFUL SPEECH ('SATYAM')

Introduction

‘Truthful speech’ means speaking the truth. There are several subtle aspects that one needs to know about ‘Truthful speech’. Due to a lack of a complete knowledge of ‘Truthful speech’, many hold erroneous notions that “one cannot practice truthful speech”, and that “if one follows truthful speech, one cannot survive and succeed in the world”.

Definition of Truthful Speech

‘Truthful speech’ is to speak what we know to be the truth.

Truth is practiced in three stages;

i. **Understanding Truth correctly in our mind is ‘Right Understanding’ ('Ritam' in Sanskrit / ’Unmai’ in Tamil)**
ii. **Speaking what we know to be the truth is ‘Truthful speech’ ('Satyam' in Sanskrit /’Vaymai’ in Tamil)**
iii. **Performing action in accordance with truthful speech is “Right action” (‘Dharma’ in Sanskrit/‘Meymai’ in Tamil)**

Thus, at the intellectual level, getting the right understanding is 'Truth' ('Ritam' in Sanskrit / 'Unmai' in Tamil). At the level of speech, speaking what we have understood to be the Truth, is 'Truthful speech'. ('Satyam' in Sanskrit /'Vaymai' in Tamil). And functioning (through our body) in consonance with what we have stated, is 'Right action' ('Dharma' in Sanskrit/ 'Meymai' in Tamil).

Thus, truth is a virtue that is to be practiced at all the three levels of mind, speech, and body in the form of 'Right Understanding', 'Truthful Speech' and 'Right Action'.

As speaking the truth is said to be 'Truthful speech', what we have understood in our mind has to be the truth, in the first place. If some one has given us erroneous news, and if we were to take it to be the truth and speak accordingly, even though we might be speaking as per our understanding, our speech would not become 'Truthful speech'. Thus, truthful speech ('Satyam'/'Vaymai') follows right understanding ('Ritam'/'Unmai').

So also, if we do not act as per what we have stated, our speech gets falsified. Thus, truthful speech ('Satyam'/'Vaymai') is also dependent on right action ('Dharma'/'Maimai').

Truthful speech ('Satyam'/'Vaymai') is the intermediary between right understanding ('Ritam'/

'Unmai') and right action ('Dharma'/'Maimai') and is a very important virtue.

The combined practice of truth in thought, word, and deed ('Ritam-Satyam-Dharma' / 'Unmai-Vaymai - Maimai'), is the discipline called 'Arjavam' (alignment, being straight, straightness, straight forwardness, or rectitude). Thus, Truthful speech ('Satyam'/'Vaymai') is the core of 'Arjavam' (being straight/ straightness).

Thus, the correct definition of 'Truthful speech' is, firstly to obtain the right knowledge; then to correctly state such knowledge that has been understood; and to finally implement as per what is stated.

Yet another definition for 'Truthful speech' is "not speaking the untruth". It is not necessary that we should speak all that we know to be the truth. But, what is important is that "whatever is spoken must be the truth". Thus, 'not speaking untruth' is also 'Truthful speech'.

Thus, both 'speaking the truth', and 'not speaking the untruth' are the two commonly known definitions for 'Truthful speech'.

However, in the 'Dharma Sastra', certain other, subtler explanations are given for 'Truthfulness'. We will study them further.

Truthful speech ('Satyam'/'Vaymai') and the Good ('Sreyas'/ 'Nanmai')

While giving the definition of 'Truthful speech', the wise have defined it to be "speaking that which results in the greatest good".

Saint Thiru Valluvar stated,

> **'Vaymai enappaduvathu yaathenil yaathonrum theemai ilaatha solal' (**Tamil**)**
>
> **'Such a speech, which is free from the slightest negativity, is said to be the 'Truthful speech'.**

Here, 'Truthful speech' is explained to be speaking that which results in the good. This does not mean that 'Truth' is different from 'the good' ('Sreyas'). Indeed, 'Truth' and 'the good' are always interconnected. Even so, in a given situation speaking such a 'truth' which results in 'the good', is 'Truthful speech'. Thus, 'the good' precedes 'Truthful speech'. For example: if a person gets to know about the disease that he has contracted, if that awareness would only give him fear, sorrow and detrimental result, such a truth is not resulting in what is the good. In such a case, hiding the truth and informing him differently becomes necessary. Thus in 'Truthful speech', the good supersedes the truth.

The Ultimate Good ('Sreyas')

The antonym to the word 'Ultimate Good' (the ultimate welfare/ 'Sreyas') is bad or evil. That which would not result in harm to the body, the mind, and the intellect, is the ultimate good. 'Arogyam' (freedom from disease/ Health) is good for the body. Virtues are good for the mind. Wisdom is good for the intellect.

Generally, people tend to consider the sorrow that they experience to be bad and happiness to be good. It is not entirely true that happiness is good and that sorrow is bad.

Certain sorrows might yield us the good. And, all happy instances might not yield what is good.

Many food items that are tasty and give pleasure to the tongue do not result in 'Arogyam' (freedom from disease, good health) which is the good of the body. The pleasure that is experienced in the mind due to intoxicating substances (smoking, alcoholic drinks, and drugs) is not good ('Sreyas'/'Nanmai'). The pleasure experienced due to cheap and lowly habits such as talking mockingly and in a contemptuous manner about others would not yield the good. So also, ignorance and delusion ('Moham') do not result in the good of the intellect. In this manner, one should realise that happiness is different and that which is good is different.

Katopanishad states,

> **"When the good ('Sreyas') and the pleasant ('Preyas') appear before one, the wise person leaves out the pleasant and opts for the good"**

Just as that which is pleasant is different from the good, so is the bad different from sorrow.

Not all the sorrows that we experience are detrimental to us. Many times in our life, it is the sorrow that refines us. The difficulties that occur in our life are indeed the instruments to teach us certain truths.

By selecting the type of difficulties that result in our good, and by avoiding the pleasures that do not yield us the good, we should seek and pursue the good.

'Tapas' (Austerity) is the term used to denote 'giving up of the pleasure that does not yield the good' and 'opting for and taking up of the sorrow that yields us the good'.

Thus, if we investigate what is good for us, it would comprise the health ('Arogyam'/ freedom from disease) of the body, virtues for the mind, and wisdom (right knowledge) for the intellect. Whatever factors help us by giving the good, are also good.

Since health ('Arogyam') is good for the body, the food that results in good health, exercises, etc., are good for the body. As virtues are good for the mind, everything that is helpful to acquire such virtues is good for the mind. Since wisdom (right knowledge) is good is for the intellect, items such as scriptures and books that are of assistance are good for the intellect.

Our speech could become an instrument resulting in the good of others or in a manner that results in their detriment. Therefore, truthful speech ('Satyam'/'Vaymai') is one that results in good to us and to others.

We are going to study 'Truthful speech' in three steps. In all these three stages, the good ('Sreyas') shall be the key factor or nucleus.

Three stages of Truthful speech

The discipline of 'Truthful speech' should be practiced in three ways. All these three stages that we are going to study are 'Truthful speech' only. To start with, the first stage among these three is to be followed. Only when one is unable to follow this first stage, one should go to the second stage. And upon being unable to follow even the second stage, one should go to the third stage.

These three stages are respectively,

Stage 1 : Speaking the truth

Stage 2 : Hiding the truth, and
Stage 3 : Changing the truth and speaking.

All these three are steps in 'Truthful speech'. We will now investigate these in detail.

First Stage of Truthful speech - 'Speaking the truth'

Our first and foremost effort should be 'to speak the truth'. The general definition of truthful speech is also 'to speak the truth', or 'not speaking the untruth'.

When we speak the truth, we should make sure to see if the ultimate good results through it. If the ultimate good ('Sreyas') results, then one should follow only the first stage of 'Truthful speech'. When it is possible to follow this stage and yet if one goes down to the lower and subsequent stages, such a practice becomes the 'Untruth'. It is only when 'speaking the truth' would not result in the good ('Sreyas'), should one go to the second lower stage.

Second Stage of Truthful speech - 'Hiding the truth'

In a situation when speaking the truth would not result in the good, suppressing or hiding the truth is not wrong. Indeed, it becomes necessary to suppress the truth. If a person does not have the strength to receive and digest the truth, suppressing the truth from him or masking the truth alone is 'Dharma' (Right action). This

is akin to the case of the doctor hiding the true severity of the disease, while counseling to his patient.

Also, it is not necessary for us to speak all that is known to us as the truth. We saw the general meaning of 'Truthful speech' as 'not speaking the untruth'. If good would result only by not speaking the truth and by masking it, then such suppression or masking of truth becomes 'Truthful speech'.

In this context, we should understand the subtle secret in 'Dharma' (Right Conduct). Though truth would always result in the good, if those who were to receive such truth do not have the mental strength to receive it, speaking such truth would only result in harm. In such a situation, we should be patient and take due course of time to give the truth. For example, to a baby that has the ability to digest milk alone, one should not start feeding solid foods.

A young person commenced attending Bhagawad Gita classes, and he truthfully informed this to his father. But, the father put a bar on the young man's attending the classes. A literal war resulted in their home on this account. In this instance, the cause for the problem was the speaking of the truth and not hiding it. When truth was told to a father who has not understood the benefits that accrue by the study of Gita, such truth had not resulted in the good.

On several occasions in our life, the reason for our facing difficulties is because we give the truth that is known to us to those who are unfit to receive it.

Therefore, where it is necessary to hide the truth, it should be hidden.

Normally, one tends to hide only one's bad, negative actions. So we generalise and conclude that whatever is hidden is wrong. But in certain occasions, there is compulsion for us to hide truth and good actions as well. We notice cases where the husband and the wife could be doing charity or such other good actions, without the knowledge of one another. Thus, situations do arise where even good actions are required to be done without others' knowledge. Such actions are also 'Dharma' (Right action). It is not necessary for one to develop guilt-complex in such cases.

The important thing to note is that the actions that we might perform surreptitiously should be those that are permitted by 'Dharma' (Right action) and that they should result in the good ('Sreyas'). Hiding the truth in this manner becomes 'Truthful speech'.

Third Stage of Truthful speech - 'Speaking Untruth'

In situations where speaking the truth would not result in 'Sreyas'(the ultimate good), and if hiding the truth is also not possible, then, speaking contrary to truth becomes 'Truthful speech'.

Sage Thiru Valluvar said,

> “If falsehood were to result in the good which is without flaws, such falsehood is indeed Truthful speech ”

Untruth that results in 'flawless good' is considered to be ‘Truthful speech’ only.

The normal meaning of untruth is ‘that which is contrary to the truth’. But here, untruth is said to become ‘Truthful speech’!

If all ‘Untruth’ is said to be ‘Truthful speech’, then there would not be any distinction between the two words, ‘Untruth’ and ‘Truthful speech’. The fact is that ‘untruth is untruth’; and **‘truth is truth’** only. But even so, in certain occasions, 'Untruth' becomes ‘truthful speech’. Wherever good results due to untruth, such untruth becomes ‘truthful speech’. It should be noted that wherever the benefit is exclusively for the person who is speaking the untruth, such untruth remains to be untruth only.

Also, only when one is not able to follow the first two stages of truthful speech as discussed earlier, should one descend to this third and lowest stage. When one realizes that all these three stages are indeed ‘Truthful speech’, is it not a mistake for one to think that it is not possible to live one’s life following the discipline of ‘Truthful speech’?

In the example of the doctor that we saw earlier, the doctor has the options of telling the truth to his

patient, of hiding the truth, and of even telling the untruth. Whichever option he might choose, it should result in the good. But if the doctor, for the sake of money or his own benefit, twists the truth and speaks, it becomes untruth and would yield the result of 'Papam' (sin) for him.

Where one has to speak only the truth, if one hides truth or speaks differently, he lands in difficulties. So also, where one has to suppress the facts and or has to speak differently, if one speaks the truth, one lands in difficulties. If one seeks to live following 'Truthful speech', one has to be more attentive and careful than while playing a game of Chess.

Pursuing 'Truthful speech' is to pursue the good ('Sreyas') in one's speech. Pursuing what is good through the three faculties, namely, one's body, speech, and mind is 'Dharma' (right action). A 'Tapas' (austerity) that does not yield the good would not result in our progress.

Hitherto, we saw the definition of 'Truthful speech'. We will now see certain other aspects of 'Truthful speech'.

'Satyam eva jayate' -(Truth alone triumphs)

The Mundaka Upanishad declares,

सत्यं एव जयते

'Satyam eva jayate'(Sanskrit)

Truth alone triumphs.

It means,

satyam	=	truth or truthful speech
eva	=	alone
jayate	=	would succeed

We must understand this sentence, which literally means 'Truth alone triumphs', to mean that 'he who follows truthful speech alone would succeed'.

At this juncture, we might get a serious doubt. Most people are not prepared to accept this 'Upanishadic' statement with total trust. They opine thus: "In these difficult times, if one were to speak the truth, one cannot survive"; "'These are not the times for one to be truthful", or "He who speaks the truth is a fool". The reason for such a view is that, in many circumstances they have seen untruth succeeding, and they have also seen the truthful person meeting with failures and difficulties. Further, they have also seen both in their own experience and in the experience of others, that those who speak untruth achieve their tasks easily, and that through untruth they get immediate gains. Thereby, one tends to think that the statement that 'truthful speech alone triumphs' is not true.

Here we are going to see a very subtle concept.

When it is our experience that, by giving up truth and by pursuing untruth, immediate gains are achieved and that it is possible to escape from certain difficult circumstances, how could the statement - 'truthful speech alone triumphs"- be true ?

Yes, by pursuing the untruth, immediate gains, success and the like are obtained. But, such a gain is not a true gain. It is a false and pleasant apparition that is gained at that time alone. The loss due to untruth is not noticed at that time. The pleasure that is gained due to untruth is the consequence of 'Tamo-guna' (lack of attention, laziness and dullness), it is the result of ignorance. The loss that results on account of untruth is incomparable. Such gain due to untruth is trivial. For the sake of the trivial gain if one gives up 'Truthful speech', what a great loss it would be!

It is true that there is a gain due to untruth. It is also true that there a great loss due to untruth. When we consider the magnitude of the loss due to untruth, the gain cannot be taken to be a gain at all.

When one pursues 'Truthful speech', some losses could result. But if we evaluate the good that would result, such loss cannot be termed as a loss at all. The losses that result from 'Truthful speech' are just an appearance. The truth is that which yields the good.

We will understand this through an example.

A certain person is in the middle income level. He is able to save only a little out of his earnings. In his mind, he has the feelings of lack of security and fear about his future. He thinks that only when he acquires money, he would have security and would experience happiness in his mind. It is not just him, but generally most people opine in this manner.

To such a person, whom we have taken in our example, only money seems to be the priority. Suppose a situation arose, whereby he could get lot of money if he were to give up truthful speech. He then would evaluate the pros and cons of the situation; "should I pursue Truthful speech or should I opt for money?"

And he decided that with the money he could acquire, in the course of time, a house, a car, and newly acquired respect in the society. He also concluded that money would give him security and happiness.

His intellect was unable to consider the good that would result from 'Truthful speech'. So he gave up 'Truthful speech' and opted to collect the money. And by giving up 'Truthful speech' and by pursuing untruth, he became a very rich person. Around him, he accumulated lot of objects and people, for the sake of his protection. He was surrounded by many pleasure giving objects, as well. He climbed up the ladder in the society, and received titles of being a great person. If these external aspects alone are seen, it would not appear that 'Truthful speech' had succeeded at all.

But, let us now see his mind.

The most important reason as to why he sacrificed ‘Truthful speech’ was to remove the feelings of lack of security, fear, etc., from his mind. But even after acquiring money, the sense of fear had not gone from his mind. His current fear is that the money should not go away from him. He now has the fear of the income tax officers. Having tasted the comforts of life, having become addicted and a slave to them now, there is the fear that he should not be deprived of these comforts. He also has the fear that the untruths that he had spoken should not get exposed, resulting in the loss of his reputation.

He, who thought earlier that money would protect him, has now understood that indeed he has to protect the money.

Interestingly, the fear which he wanted to get rid of and for the sake of which he had forsaken ‘Truthfulness’, that fear has not left him. Earlier, he had the fear of not having money. Now, he has the fear that money should not leave him. Earlier, he was able to get a good night’s sleep. Now, to be able to sleep, he needs sleeping pills. Though he has many gates to enclose him and give him protection, a new type of fear has entered his mind.

Indeed, it is only ‘the gate of Truthful speech’ that could prevent fear from entering one’s mind and protect it.

The accumulation of wealth is the success that had resulted due to his giving up the 'Truthful speech'. But the purposes, namely, gaining security and absence of fear, for the sake of which he had accumulated the wealth, those have not been obtained. Considering only the accumulated wealth which he had acquired by being untruthful, we might think that 'Truthful speech' had failed.

But if we observe his mind, we would understand that only 'Truthful speech' has succeeded.

We have to understand this truth with even greater clarity. Therefore, we will see the example of another person.

This person is pursuing 'Truthful speech' and is living on the income that he gets thus. Much wealth has not been accumulated by him. But his motto in life is 'Truthful speech'. As a result of the pursuit of 'Truthful speech', he has acquired a contented mind and a courage that is immeasurable. His mind has become free of the sense of insecurity, fear, etc. He has attained the feeling of satiety, the feeling that 'what I have is enough'.

'Truthful speech' had not yielded external objects and wealth to this person. But at the same time, it has given him a steadfast mind, fearlessness, and satiety.

Now, who is truly successful between both of

these persons, whom we have considered in our examples?

Undoubtedly, the successful person is one who has pursued 'Truthful speech'. Thereby the statement, that 'Truthful speech alone triumphs' ('Satyam eva jayate') is the truth.

By the pursuit of 'Truthful speech', courage is instilled in the mind. Lowly fears in the mind are removed. The mind experiences a sense of satiety. The feeling of jealousy at others, who merely accumulate wealth, will get removed. Esteem for us (self validation/ self esteem) and the maturity to accept ourselves (self acceptance) would result. The gain due to the giving up of 'Truthful speech', which could yield such great benefits, is like selling our eyes for purchasing a television set.

Occasionally, one might experience some losses due to the pursuit of 'Truthful speech'. But, if one evaluates the benefits, such losses cannot be termed to be losses at all; these losses need to be considered as investments. In our life, one cannot get anything free. It is only as a result of austerity ('Tapas') that one could achieve anything. If we consider the losses and difficulties that result due to 'Truthful speech' as an austerity ('Tapas'), "Truthful speech always triumphs". As he pursued 'Truthful speech', Raja Harischandra faced several problems initially. But ultimately, the greatest good resulted. From an angle, one might say that 'Truthful speech' was unsuccessful

initially, but it succeeded ultimately. Upon contemplation of the matter, one could recognise that the initial set backs were but the 'Tapas' (austerity), for the great benefit that finally resulted. Such being the case, 'Truthful speech' never fails. Though from one angle it could appear that there is an initial set back, in reality, there is never a failure for 'Truthful speech'.

Also the very benefit, to achieve which we forsook 'Truthful speech', is not attained at all. Moreover, it is only by pursuing 'Truthful speech' that we could attain such desired benefit.

Falsehood makes even the strongest person a coward. One might accumulate lot of wealth by pursuing untruth. But in the process, he would lose the mental state that is essential to experience and enjoy the wealth. Untruth cultivates impurities such as jealousy, and fear. In contrast, due to the virtue of 'Truthful speech' the mind gets cleansed of its impurities and becomes refined. Our mind becomes our friend.

The wise declare their experience,

"Dharmo rakshathi rakshitaha"

The Dharma (Righteousness) that is protected (pursued by you), would protect (you).

Therefore, only when we follow the superior Dharma of 'Truthful speech', would we be able to succeed in getting whatever we desire. And, 'Truthful speech' which is the true reason for our progress, alone triumphs.

Discipline in speech

Man alone has the ability to be able to convey his thoughts to others through his speech and make them understand. The animals do communicate their feelings to their own type, to some limited extent. But, man has got the ability to share feelings is a superior manner. Such ability could become a curse; or it could change to be a blessing.

Through 'Truthful speech', we make our ability to speak to be a blessing. By falsehood, we convert it to be a curse.

Upon our waking up in the morning, the reason for our mind to be somewhat calm is because we have not yet commenced speaking with any one and none has spoken to us yet. Within a short time from our commencing to speak, both the things, namely, our getting hurt and we hurting others happen.

Our speech or word is but an instrument to convey our feelings and our knowledge to others. Instead, the word is often being used as a weapon to attack others. As speech could burn more than even the fire, Sage Tiruvalluvar states that 'the burn caused by the tongue would not heal'.

Instead of using our words as weapons, if we handle them properly, they would result in the good of us and others. Such beneficial words are indeed 'Truthful speech'.

The words that are spoken by one should be regulated by four rules. These are

1. 'Satyam' (Truth) ;
2. 'Hitam' (the Good);
3. 'Priyam' (the Pleasant), and
4. 'Mitam' (Brevity)

If we keep these four rules in our mind while we speak, that indeed is the 'Tapas' (Austerity) that we follow through our speech. This is what is referred to as 'Vak Tapas'('Vow of the speech') or 'Discipline in speech'.

1. 'Satyam' (Truth) : This rule means 'Speaking the Truth'. We saw this to be 'Truthful speech'. We also saw that it is erroneous to think that 'Truthful speech' cannot be followed, and that 'Truthful speech' is of three stages. Pursuing 'Truthful speech' in such a manner is the first rule or austerity that is done through one's speech.

2. 'Hitam' (the Good) : 'Hitam' means the good; speaking that which results in the ultimate or greatest good. This aspect is also connected to 'Truthful speech'. We already saw that, for the sake of the

good, truth could be concealed or even stated as the contrary. The words that emanate from us should be so as to result in the good for us and for the others.

3. 'Priyam' (the Pleasant) - 'Priyam' refers to the expression of a truth that results in the good, in a gentle manner and without wounding the other's mind. It is speaking in a sweet, pleasant, or polite manner whereby the listener's mind does not feel sorrowful. Speaking in such a manner is 'Priyam'.

It was the habit of a certain businessman to speak and give orders to the construction labourers who work for him, in an angry and harsh manner. An elderly person who noticed this spoke to him and pointed out the mistake in his approach thus : "Why can't you give your orders in a softer manner? Whether you speak in an angry and harsh manner or in a soft and kind manner, you would still be giving the same order. So, why can't you speak to labourers in a calmer manner?". The businessman realised his mistake, and thenceforth started to speak in a peaceful and gentle manner and realised the superior results of such an approach.

One should speak avoiding the use of uncivil words, and speak in a sweet manner without causing fear and sorrow in the minds of the listener.

A Swamiji was living in a hut at the foot of a hill. An illiterate person who was residing in a nearby place told the Swamiji, "If any insect enters your hut please raise an alarm, so that I can come and help." Though he used the word 'insect', he was indeed referring to

the snake. As the use of the word 'snake' could result in fear in the listener's mind, even this illiterate person (!) used that milder word 'insect'. Handling one's words in this manner is called 'Priyam'.

4. Mitam (Limited talk or brevity) : 'Mitam' means speaking limitedly, only to the extent necessary. Talking too much (more than necessary) is the most important reason for a person to lose his respect. But, every one loves to talk. If so, who is to listen! Only very few have acquired the mental attitude to listen. The greatest pain that could result to a person is to speak to a person who is not willing to listen.

The reason why the elderly lose their respect with the younger generation is because of their excessive talk, beyond what is required. As one gets older, the limbs of the body such as hands, legs, eyes, and so on lose their ability to function gradually. But the tongue does not get tired, however much one might talk. For the mind that was earlier interacting with the world through several outlets (limbs and organs), in old age it is only the mouth that is left as available. Thus in old age, the tendency to speak increases. This excessive talk does not result in the good of either the speaker, or the listener.

In childhood, we took a lot of effort to learn to speak. Only when we take an effort that is multifold and engage in practice, could we check the tendency to talk more than what is necessary.

Techniques to pursue "Truthful speech'

It is only by appropriate practice that any virtue could be acquired. We will study some techniques for pursuing the superior discipline, namely, 'Truthful speech'.

1. Realising the superiority of 'Truthful speech': As we realise the superiority of 'Truthful speech' more and more, our desire to practice it would enhance. Later, such a desire would culminate in its practice.

Every one gets to know what is right and what is wrong, quite easily. Who at all does not know that speaking untruth is wrong? But, it is only that one does not realise the loss that results from untruth. This is so because, the petty gain that is gained from untruth deludes the true knowledge in one's intellect.

The story of King Harischandra is recounted not just for giving one the knowledge that one should be truthful. It is recounted only to make one realise the supremacy of 'Truthful speech'. One after another, Harischandra faces testing situations. The strength to bear those difficulties was given by 'Truthful speech'. Due to the pursuit of 'Truthful speech', despite losing all his wealth and belongings, he faces the situations with mental strength, and sense of fullness. Ultimately, 'Truthful speech' gave him a very high status.

The reason why we easily give up 'Truthful

speech' is on account of our not realising its greatness. A mind that realises the greatness of 'Truthful speech', would not sacrifice it.

A certain person had given a large sum of money to his friend. That individual passed away suddenly. When his wife and son requested that friend for the return of the money, the latter told a lie that he had not received the money. And he kept that money with himself. Then he invested the money so retained for his own business and acquired a lot of wealth as profit. Though he had gained a lot of money, the feeling of lack of trust sprouted and developed in his mind. He was unable to trust anyone. He became a mental patient, even fearing that his own wife might poison him.

Our attempt to cheat the world is but cheating ourselves. Our being honest with others is but being protecting ourselves. This indeed is the secret of 'Dharma' (Right conduct).

Thus, realising the glory and supremacy of 'Truthful speech' is the first technique to be able to pursue it.

'Sastra' teaches us of the supremacy of 'Truthful speech' through several stories. And, 'Sastra' gives us the mandate to follow 'Truthful speech'.

सत्यं वद

'Satyam vada' – 'Speak the truth'

'Sastra' would never advise something that is impossible to follow. 'Sastra' would not also advise us the obvious, something that we would naturally do. 'Sastra' would not advise us, 'breathe!', which is but natural!

'Sastra' would only advise that which is for our good, which has to be pursued with some deliberate effort and discipline on one's part.

Indeed, speaking the truth is somewhat difficult. But, at the same time, 'speaking the truth' is not an impossible matter.

If we were to realise the great glory of 'Truthful speech' which is advised by the 'Sastra', we would very easily follow it.

2. 'Dharma Anushtanam' (Pursuit of 'Dharma') : When one deviates from the path of 'Dharma'(right conduct) and follows 'Adharma'(non-righteous conduct), speaking the untruth becomes unavoidable, in order to hide the mistakes that have been committed.

The reason why the pursuit of 'Truthful speech' is felt to be difficult is because, to be able to be truthful, one has to totally avoid 'Adharma'. How could a

person habituated to bad deeds such as stealing, use of intoxicants, non-performance of one's duty, and illegal acquisition of wealth, be able to pursue 'Truthful speech'!

When one lives a life based on 'Dharma', the pursuit of 'Truthful speech' is very easy. Thereby, to be able to pursue 'Truthful speech', we have to give up the other negative deeds and habits.

3. Mental strength : On many occasions, we tend to speak the untruth due to lack of courage. At times, we might slip from our duty, or there might be some weaknesses in us. To be able to speak the truth without covering up our flaws, we require mental strength. Between the two, namely, making a mistake and the subsequent untruth to cover up the mistake, hiding the mistake is a bigger mistake.

A Swamiji gave a letter to his disciple to be dropped in the post box. A week later, when he met the disciple, the Swamiji asked the disciple if he had posted the letter. The disciple replied that he had posted the letter. But, the fact was that the letter was still with the disciple.

In this instance, the first mistake was not posting the letter. But, the greater mistake was the non-acceptance his own mistake.

As long as we keep hiding our flaws, they would continue to be with us. When we accept that we have made a mistake and when we have the mental

strength to speak the truth, our flaws would soon disappear from us.

We should not also accept an undeserving praise. When some one blames us undeservingly, don't we hasten to refute that blame! If instead some one attributes a greatness to us that is not in us and praises us instead, we not only keep quiet but also relish the praise. Such false behaviour is very low and mean. Such a weakness becomes the reason for one to deviate from 'Truthful speech'. Not advertising the virtues and glory that is with us is a superior 'Tapas' (austerity). Talking about a greatness that is absent in us is a mean quality. If we investigate our speech we would notice that there is lot of self-praise. It is necessary to cultivate mental strength, to be able to give up such self-praise and to accept the weaknesses that are in us.

It is alright, if there are some flaws in us. We could remove them with appropriate efforts, in due course. But, actions such as hiding our flaws, justifying them, and claiming a greatness that is not present, are all wrong. One must remove these weaknesses forth with.

4. Taking 'Truthful speech' as a 'Vratam' (vow): Some people observe the vow of fasting on certain specific days. The very intention ('Sankalpam') to fast, gives the concerned the requisite strength to face the hunger on that day. But on the other days, while not observing the vow of fasting, one is not following discipline in respect of food.

When a 'Sadhana' (spiritual practice) is being followed as a vow, it is easy to pursue that practice. Till such a time that a virtue becomes our very nature, we should take that virtue as a 'Vratam' (vow). A person, who is highly disciplined about his food, need not take a vow in respect of food discipline. But, till such time that such a maturity is acquired, it is necessary to take the discipline in food as a vow.

One should pursue 'Truthful speech' as a 'Vratam' (austerity). At present, falsehood happens to be with us, as our nature. In the same manner, till such time when 'Truthful speech' becomes our very nature, we should take 'Truthful speech' as a 'Vratam' (vow).

Method to take 'truthful speech' as an austerity

Firstly, we should not disclose to any one that we are taking the vow of 'Truthful speech'. It should be kept as a secret.

To start with, select any one day of the week. Suppose we have selected Wednesday. Take a vow that on that particular day, say, from 6 am till 10 am, "I will pursue Truthful speech". During that period, in our mind the thought that, "this period is the 'time for Truth'" would be present. There would be a kind of awareness in our mind. Indeed, the very reason of taking a vow is only to create this awareness. Beyond 10 am, we could behave in the normal manner. After a few weeks of practice in this manner, the period could

be extended, say, from 6 am to 12 am.

Progressing in this manner gradually, we could observe the vow of 'Truthful speech' for a full day; later, for two days in a week, and so on. And finally, we should convert our entire life as one of 'Truthful speech'.

Creating awareness is an art.

We decide that we should not discuss a certain matter in a certain place. On the contrary, we end up speaking that very matter at that place. We decide that we should not overeat, but, we end up eating beyond limits. In this manner, why do we do a thing that we don't wish to do? The reason for this is lack of awareness.

It is to create awareness, that we observe many 'Vratams' (austerities).

Upanishad gives us the warning, "Don't be inattentive!".

There is no better method than 'Vratam' (austerity) to bring our attention to the virtue that we have to acquire.

5. Silence ('Maunam') : If we make it a habit to follow 'Maunam' (silence), by and large, we could escape from many false statements.

We saw that 'not speaking untruth' is 'Truthful speech'. If we were to practice 'Maunam' (silence), we could attain many other superior virtues, besides 'Truthful speech'.

There are instruments to evaluate the quality of any item. So also, the words that we speak are the instruments that indicate the extent of our progress in spirituality. Our speech is the instrument that evaluates the maturity gained by us.

'What we speak', 'How we speak', and 'How much we speak' indicate our present state of maturity.

We tend to analyse others' talks, do we analyse our own talk to that extent?

Upon introspection, we would notice that we speak about others' flaws and about our greatness. And we would notice that we speak in a demeaning manner about others' weaknesses, while justifying our own weaknesses.

It is only through our speech that we inflict sorrow to us and to others, and thereby we accumulate a lot of sin.

In the initial stages, no one would have the balanced state of mind to understand the situation correctly, and to speak the right matter, in the right manner, and to the right extent. The 'Vratam' (vow) of silence helps us greatly to acquire a balanced state in our speech.

God has given us the ability to speak. It is wrong, both not to use this ability, and to misuse it.

In the matter of food, for example, both the extremes of overeating and fasting are easy. But, partaking food in a disciplined and limited manner is extremely difficult. The case of speech is quite similar.

If silence is taken up as a 'Vratam' (vow), one could avoid falsehood; self-praise could be avoided; one could avoid demeaning talk of others; and disturbance of the mind could be avoided.

We should give up arrogance. But, we should maintain our self respect. 'Speaking more than required' results in loss of self respect. As one reduces the extent of speech, the ability to think improves. The mind-set to listen to what others speak develops. If we wish to acquire knowledge, our speech should reduce.

Anjaneya has the title of ' Master of words'. He had control on his speech. That is how he excelled in all the aspects of devotion, service, strength, and knowledge.

Understanding the nature of 'Truthful speech', through the pursuit of the right practices for attaining this virtue, we could fully practice 'Truthful speech'.

4

PATIENCE

One minute of Patience, many years of Peace

**Patience is needed with everyone;
particularly, with oneself .**

Definition of Patience

Patience, a combination of courage and endurance, is the ability to face prosperity and adversity with calmness.

Patience, which is one of the strengths of the mind, develops from subtle intellect and courage.

Patience does not manifest from delusion of the mind, or weakness, or incapacity or laziness. Acting late and not functioning on account of laziness are not patience. Patience is a virtue that comes from 'Satva guna'. Tiresomeness, laziness, inaction, delayed action, etc., which come from 'Tamo guna' are not the superior virtue, namely, patience. That is why, the buffalo is not pointed out as an example for patience. The slow crossing of the roadway by the buffalo is not said to demonstrate patience. Instead, Mother Earth is given as an example for patience.

Pursuing patience does not mean inaction in any manner or giving up effort.

Patience is also a form of action.

When seen superficially, it would appear that patience is being inactive while in the grip of sorrow. But, in certain situations, being attentive and waiting for an opportune time is the supreme effort. Where one has to be patient, not reacting in any manner is the best action.

The knowledge as to, 'where one should act' and 'where one should be patient', is a very important one. While pursuing patience, the inner attitude that one should have is most important. Patience is the strength and capability to withstand the onslaughts from the situations.

We will now see, as to where and how, we should pursue patience.

1. Patience – while doing action : Whatever the action we undertake, we should perform it only with the appropriate speed and pace. Losing patience, if we perform the action quicker than required, the quality of the result of that action would deteriorate. Moreover, we cannot perform that action properly. Starting with the daily routine actions, such as taking food to all the actions that emanate from us, we should have patience. A proverb says that 'an impatient person cannot succeed'.

2. Patience – after doing action : After the performance of any action, its result would be obtained only after a time-gap. Results of some actions might be obtained instantly, but the results of certain other actions fructify only after a while. When we take our food, appeasement of hunger is the immediately obtained result. But, when we sow a seed, the result does not accrue immediately. Depending on the nature of the seed, only after a corresponding time gap, the result occurs. In the time duration that is between the completion of our action and the accruing of the result, we should maintain patience.

A boy was interested in developing a vegetable garden in his house. He planted certain tubers therein. Even before the plant could sprout, he desired to see if the tubers have developed and dug the earth. Soon the plants died. In this case, his lack of patience was the obstacle for him to get the result.

2. Patience – after attaining the result of the action : Upon obtaining the result of our action, we should accept that result with patience. Oftentimes, when the expected level of result is not attained, we lose our patience, and we act in a manner that results in the loss of even the obtained result. Instead, though the expected result is not attained, we should first accept the result that has been obtained, and thereafter we should embark upon the effort that is necessary.

At times, we come to know of students who see the results of examinations, and if the expected marks

are not obtained, lose their patience and act in an adverse manner. The results of the examination could even be wrong, some times. Without losing patience, if they had acted with a little calmness, they would have come to a good conclusion.

There is no law that 'the results should be as we expected'. The results that we get depend on many reasons that are not known to us. Therefore, whatever might be the results of our action, accepting them with patience is a superior 'Tapas' (austerity).

4. Patience – in sorrow : If a situation resulting in sorrow arises, we should put full effort to remove that sorrow. If even after such an effort the sorrow were to continue, accepting such sorrow with full mind is patience. For example, when we get a head ache, upon our taking a medicine to relieve that head ache, the ache does not go away immediately. The medicine would require a little time to give relief. During that waiting period, accepting the unavoidable pain with our full mind, and without grieving, we should observe patience. A sorrow, that we accept, could be experienced and faced with calmness. The benefit due to patience is to be able to bear the sorrow, while maintaining mental calmness. It is a superior virtue to intellectually realise that 'no sorrow would last for long', and that 'others are but mere instruments for all our sorrow', and 'to be able to welcome and accept such sorrow'. The intention of the above is not that if some one continues to give us sorrow, we should avoid all effort to remedy that situation, and that should accept the situation with patience. We should take all the efforts possible to remove that sorrow, and when we

are unable to redress the situation, then we should pursue the 'Sadhana' (practice) of patience. Patience is the virtue that is to be observed while we are attempting to remove the sorrow, and also after our efforts. Accepting the sorrow and experiencing the sorrow with patience, are the importance characteristics of patience.

It is while in sorrow that a person loses all the knowledge that he has acquired. He loses the knowledge that he should live as per 'Dharma' (Ethics). He feels instigated by the emotion of revenge, to inflict sorrow upon others. One who accepts and bears with sorrow does not come to such states of thinking.

The very experience of sorrow that makes one a criminal, makes another into a 'Jnani' (Wiseman/ sage). When the experience of sorrow is combined with the virtue of patience, such sorrow itself becomes a 'Tapas' (austerity). In such a case, sorrow itself refines the person more and more.

5. Patience – in pleasure : Even while experiencing pleasure, one has to maintain patience. In a pleasurable situation, if one acts losing one's patience, such a pleasure is lost and the situation could become sorrowful.

While sucking tasty honey, if one loses patience and sucks in a hasty manner, gasping could happen and one might die of heart attack. We see that many lose their balance and calmness while facing

pleasurable situations.

Practicing the postponement of gratification is a kind of 'Tapas' (austerity). Just as sorrow results in delusion of one's mind, so also does pleasure make us lose our balance. Therefore, practicing patience in a pleasurable situation is also imperative.

6. Patience –in what cannot be changed : A situation that cannot be changed has to be accepted, with patience. Certain situations cannot be changed temporarily. Certain other situations can never be changed at all. For example, certain diseases cannot be cured for a short while. There is a compulsion that one has to live with certain other diseases, for as long as one lives. It is possible to change the nature of some persons. The nature of certain others cannot be changed, however hard one might try. So also, relationships, our residence, the country where we live, etc., could be such that they cannot be changed, either temporarily or permanently. When we realise intellectually that a certain thing cannot be changed, accepting that situation with patience becomes a superior 'Sadhana' (practice).

7. Patience –in Refining the Mind : Acquiring virtues and removing vices is a major transformation that should be made in our mind. Such a transformation would not be immediate. However hard we might try, we could feel the despair that our progress is not adequate, and that our mind had not changed even a little. The result of transformation of mind happens rather slowly. Therefore, it is necessary to patiently wait

for the result. If we were to lose our patience, we would not be able to continue pursuing the 'Sadhanas' (practices) that are necessary for the mental transformation. And, we might not have recognised the small advances that have been made by our mind. Looking at only the further progress that has to be made, we might lose attention of the mental transformation that we have acquired. In the journey to acquire virtues, patience is essential.

8. Patience –in patience : A person prayed thus to God !

"Lord! Give me patience immediately!"

Here he is praying to acquire patience, but without patience! Even, in acquiring the virtue of patience, one should pursue patience. That is, the virtue of patience would be mastered by us, only slowly.

Thus, we have to pursue patience in many occasions.

Techniques to cultivate Patience

We will now explore how we could acquire the virtue - patience.

1. Basic Awareness : By becoming aware of certain basic truths, we could easily pursue the virtue of patience.

Thinking that other people are the reason for the difficulties that we experience, we lose the patience, while facing that difficulty. If our teeth were to bite our tongue, we do not give us any punishment. In the same manner, this world is just an instrument that gives difficulty to us. Realising that we have only caused sorrow to us, through our own actions, if we face the sorrowful situation, we would not develop feelings such as anger, hatred, and fault finding on any one, and we would face the situation with patience.

2. Acceptance : If we practice the virtue of acceptance, we would be able to attain patience quite easily. Whatever be the experience that we face, we should accept it at first, and thereafter take the appropriate action. When we do not have the mind-set to accept the situation, we are unable to pursue patience. When we accept, we are able to face the situation, without struggle in our mind. Then, we would be able to easily acquire the virtue of patience.

3. Practice : To cultivate patience, certain practices are necessary. Each one of us loses our patience, due to a different reason. Recognising at first the situations where we lose our patience mostly, we should undertake the practice that is appropriate. Such practices as speaking with patience, taking food patiently, practicing patience while waiting, and walking with short foot steps while doing 'Pradakshinam' (circumambulation) in the temple, doing 'Japa' of (repeating) God's name slowly in the mind and practicing, would help us in cultivating patience.

4. Transforming our Rajoguna : When mind is functioning under the influence of by 'Tamo guna', laziness, slow action, etc., would manifest. While it is under the influence of 'Rajo guna', the mind would not pursue patience. Only when it is under the influence of 'Satva guna', the mind would pursue patience. In order to acquire patience, our mind must be transformed from the influence of 'Rajo guna' to 'Satva guna'. All the 'Tapas' (austerities) that we undertake are only for the sake of associating the mind with 'Satva guna'. When the mind is with 'Satva guna', patience could very easily be pursued.

Benefits of Patience

We will now list the benefits that accrue on account of our pursuing patience.

1. Patience is its own Benefit : Though several benefits accrue from the pursuit of patience, the supreme benefit that we derive from patience is patience itself. Patience gives us peace of mind, and becomes the reason for our success of all types. Whenever we maintain patience, we become the successful master of that situation. Thus, patience is both the route and the goal, as well.

2. Patience is seed for many 'Tapas' (austerities) : Patience helps us in engaging in different types of 'Tapas' (austerities). Commencing a spiritual practice ('Sadhana') is easy, but pursuing it is difficult. It is only due to the lack of patience that we are unable to

continue such 'Sadhanas' as physical exercise, practice of 'Dhyana' (meditation), and avoidance of anger. Patience is a helpful aid for all the different types of 'Tapas' (spiritual practices) that we undertake.

3. Patience is the tool for removing obstacles to our progress : For any action that we undertake, it is natural that hurdles occur. It is patience that gives us the strength to overcome the hurdles and to progress. If we lack patience, even a minor obstacle would appear to be like an insurmountable mountain. If we have patience, however big the obstacle might be, it would not appear to be an obstacle. Besides spiritual progress, even for attaining success in worldly life, patience is very essential. In society, in whichever field one might have progressed, behind such progress, we can see an untiring effort backed by patience. Transformation of the mind is not any easily attainable goal. In order to remove the hurdles in that path, the powerful weapon that we should have is patience indeed. Patience not only gives the mind peace, it also gives us the strength to remove the hurdles.

It is by facing the repeated blows of the chisel, that the rock takes the form of a beautiful sculpture. So also, only when we face our experiences with patience, does our mind get maturity.

क्षमा शस्त्रं करे यस्य दुर्जनः किं करिष्यति ।
अतृणे पतितो वह्निः स्वयमेव उपशाम्यति ॥

"Kshama sastram kare yasya durjanaha kim karishyati.
Atrune patito vahnihi swayameva upasamyati"
[Sanskrit]

What harm could an evil person do to one who has the weapon of Patience?
Does not the fire that falls on ground that is free of grass, get extinguished by itself ! "

In this manner, when we realise the nature of the superior virtue called 'Patience' and pursue it, we accrue a superior benefit.

5

SERVICE ('SEVA')

Service to society is the rent we pay for the space that we occupy on the Earth.

Service to Mankind is service to God.

'Seva' (Service) is the help that we render to others. Giving the wealth that we have got, such as our effort, our time, and our knowledge, to those who are in need without any expectation is 'Seva'.

With the sole intention of feeling happy, in seeing that others benefit and experience happiness, whatever help that we might render becomes 'Seva' (service).

The real 'Seva' is that which we render without any specific reason, without the awareness of any benefit that we might derive, just out of our natural, inner feeling that it should result in happiness to others. Only those few who have engaged themselves in true 'Seva' and attained the superior benefit ultimately would understand this truth.

Let us study the superior action of 'Seva' from different angles.

Service is a kind of Charity

'Seva' (Service) is a type of charitable action. Charity is not just giving money alone. Giving other types of wealth that we have, such as our effort, and our knowledge, to others is also a kind of charity. Just like giving money or other objects, giving our effort is also a superior charity. We should remember in this context that it is not charity or 'Seva' (service) at all, to give objects or things that are not useful to us to others. Sharing those which result in our and others' good is true 'Seva' (service).

For example, the doctor giving free medical treatment to the poor, the teacher free-teaching the poor students, those who are without resources donating their physical effort, in this manner, each one contributing his wealth to others in an appropriate manner becomes 'Seva'.

The major weakness of mankind is miserliness ('Lobham'/non-sharing). 'Lobham'(non-sharing) is the attitude of not sharing what one has with others, and having the feeling that the concerned alone should enjoy all the benefits. Whenever we give an item to others, we tend to expect that we should get in return something that is either equal to or more than, what we have given. Then alone do we feel happy that we have been successful in the transaction! If we are unable to get a commensurate return, we tend to feel that we have been cheated, or that we have lost in the bargain. It is this quality of Lobham'(miserliness) that makes us think in this manner. This lowly quality of

'Lobham' does not result in the good of either others or us. The vice of 'Lobham' becomes the cause for other vices such as jealousy, fear, hatred, selfishness, and anger.

Through 'Danam' (charity/ sharing), we could get liberated from 'Lobham' (miserliness). So also, 'Seva' (service) gets us freed from the narrow mindedness feeling that we should not share what we have with others. 'Seva' is termed 'Srama Danam'. 'Srama' means our effort. Therefore, we should understand that 'Seva' is type of charitable action, charity of our effort.

'Seva' is the fee for Knowledge

To buy any object, we have to pay its price. When the question of the price that is to be paid for acquiring knowledge arises, 'Sastra' states that knowledge could be obtained in one of the three ways only;

1. **Paying money to acquire knowledge.**
2. **Giving knowledge to acquire knowledge.**
3. **Acquiring knowledge through 'Seva' (service)**

We go to educational institutions, pay money and acquire knowledge. In general, we give wealth to acquire knowledge. Though many have the eligibility and the desire to study subjects such as medicine, due

to poverty they do not get the opportunity. Money is thus an important tool for getting such knowledge.

In the second method, we give the knowledge that we have in a certain discipline to another person, and in exchange learn the knowledge that we do not have from him. This is giving knowledge to acquire knowledge.

In the third method, one renders service and acquires knowledge. In the traditional 'Gurukula' education system, students used to render service in 'Gurukula' to the 'Guru', and used to acquire knowledge. Thereby, though one might not be having wealth, through service, one could acquire knowledge.

However, it is stated in the 'Sastra' that it is only through the knowledge that is acquired through 'Seva', that we could get complete mastery. The knowledge that is acquired through payment of money in educational institutions would be useful for us to earn money. It is necessary that we should acquire the knowledge as to how we should live with the money that we have earned. We cannot fix the monetary value for such knowledge about either ethics or about 'Iswara'. So also, we cannot fix the value for the service that one does with commitment and without monetary expectation. Only 'Seva' (service) has sufficient worth for obtaining 'Atma jnana' (Self-knowledge). Spiritual knowledge could be acquired only through 'Seva' (service).

When 'Seva' is rendered, one acquires qualifications such as humility, and faith in the Guru. Therefore, to obtain the supreme knowledge, 'Seva' alone is the ideal method.

We are indebted

We are indebted to this world. We have received benefits and happiness, in many ways, from many people. And we would not have directly helped them in any manner, whatsoever.

We would have enjoyed the music of many. We would have obtained benefits from many. We might not have been useful to them in any manner. More than from the shade of the tree that we have planted, we would have benefited from the shade of the trees that others had planted. Only a few would have got the opportunity to perform 'Seva' to the 'Guru' and obtain knowledge. Many would not have performed any kind of service to the 'Guru' and yet would have acquired knowledge. If we derive a benefit from a person, without helping that person in any manner, such benefit is termed by 'Sastra' as 'Runam' (debt). The benefit (debt) that we received from society is called 'Manushya Runam' (debt to the society); that which we derived from our parents is called 'Pitru Runam' (debt to the parents); the benefit that we obtained from living beings such as the cow is termed 'Bhuta Runam' (debt to living beings); and the benefit that we have derived by way of learning from the books of the many wise men ('Rishis') is termed 'Rishi

Runam'.

'Seva' is indeed the repayment of such debts. Without considering 'Seva' to be charity that we do, we should consider it to be an act of repayment of the debt that we had incurred. Having received things freely from one person, when we give something free to others, our debt account gets tallied. Therefore, we should realise that 'Seva' is the opportunity for us to settle our debt.

'Seva' is Investment

'Seva' is a type of Investment. In order to acquire anything in our life, there should be an investment for it. Just as we invest capital in business, the 'Seva' that we do is a kind of investment in our life. The 'Seva' performed by us to others does not ever go waste. Though we might not get any type of help or return directly from those who benefited by our 'Seva', yet in some other manner, we would be benefited. Indeed, our 'Seva' ultimately gives the benefit to us only. When we help others, in reality, we are helping ourselves. Just as the money that we have saved, and the investment that we have made, help us in the future, in the same manner, the 'Seva' that we do today, would help us in the future, when we are in need. Therefore, 'Seva' is the help that we render to us.

'Seva' to expand our mind

For the expansion of our mind, 'Seva' becomes the chief cause. Normally, our mind lives in a narrow ambit. In the beginning, our world is limited to our body. Thereafter, our mind limits itself to our family. In order to expand the mind, to refine it, and for cultivating such virtues as humility and kindness in the mind, the 'Seva' that we perform becomes the main technique.

'Seva' for Environmental protection

When we take more from nature and return less to it, the natural cycle gets affected. That is why, wherever man lives, the natural wealth is getting degraded.

Keeping the environment clean, taking care of the common places, and protecting natural wealth, become 'Seva'. Due to such service, the natural wealth gets protected. Not maintaining common areas such as parks, bus stations, foot paths, and temples clean and neat, indicates that the sense of service in man has decreased. Realising that when we protect the nature with care, the nature in turn protects us, we should protect the nature.

'Seva' to attain 'Satva guna'

'Seva' alone leads and elevates us from 'Rajo guna' to 'Satva guna'. Generally, we function on account of desire. When our mind is not instigated by

desire and at the same time, if it is unable to be calm and quiet, we should engage ourselves in 'Seva', and lead our mind to calmness. To purify and calm the mind in its many states, 'Seva' (service) happens to be an important technique.

In this manner, we should understand this 'Sadhana' (spiritual practice), namely, 'Seva' from different angles.

We will see hereunder the precautions that we should take while engaging ourselves in 'Seva'.

1. Pride : 'Seva' should not result in promoting our pride. Many develop pride and arrogance, that they are helping others in many ways. We should take care to see that 'Seva' does not promote our arrogance and pride.

2. Fame : We can see in the society that people become slaves to the fame that results from 'Seva', and engage themselves just for fame. One should not engage in 'Seva' for the sake of fame; and one should not also care for such fame. That is why, the 'Seva' that we render should be without publicity.

3. Wrong motive : At times, 'Seva' is also done with many wrong intentions. Some engage themselves in charity, 'Seva', and the like, to escape from government taxation rules. Some utilise 'Seva' for their advantage. With many types of intentions, for the sake

of self benefit, many engage themselves in 'Seva'. Therefore, we should be attentive and engage ourselves in 'Seva' with the right intentions.

4. Expectation : When we engage ourselves in 'Seva', even without our being aware, we could develop expectations from the beneficiaries, 'that they should have a feeling of gratitude to us', 'that they should accept our 'Seva' and should praise us', etc. We should take care to see that we do not develop such expectations.

In the society, 'Seva' (service) is being performed in many places. But, it is only in a few instances that true 'Seva' with the right intention, is being performed. This is why we see that there are many people who have not made much spiritual progress, even after several years of 'Seva'.

It is the truth that he, who so ever engages himself in 'Seva' with the right intention, would attain a strong mind very soon.

6

FOOD DISCIPLINE

जितं सर्वं जिते रसे

"Jitam sarvam jite rase" (Sanskrit)

One who has mastered his tongue has mastered all his senses.

The 'Dharma Sastra' states that, if a person without becoming a slave to taste, has acquired sufficient strength to keep his tongue under his own control, then he would have succeeded over the other senses.

We easily realise that it is a very highly difficult task to discipline the tongue that gives the pleasure of taste.

The five senses, namely, the body (skin), mouth, eye, nose, and ear, function both as the instruments that give us knowledge and as the instruments that give us pleasure. In the present context, mouth refers to tongue that gives the sense of taste. Food is a basic requirement for living. Consuming food is essential for the functioning of the body and for its health. But the tongue, becoming a slave to the pleasure of taste, avoids food that gives strength to the body, and instead seeks food that results in weakness and disease

of the body. With the support of the tongue we have to protect the body by giving it food and strength, instead, using the same tongue we are giving disease to the body.

Thereby, winning over (disciplining) the tongue becomes an important 'Tapas' (austerity).

Two Aspects within us

There are two aspects within us, namely, the 'Prana' and the senses. 'Prana' is engaged in the task of making the body to function. The senses function as instruments, both to give knowledge and for experiencing pleasure.

'Prana' seeks food that gives strength to the body; while the senses demand food that gives pleasure to the tongue.

'Prana' seeks air that is pure; while the senses seek air that is with fragrance.

For example, the Civil Engineer (who is responsible for the construction of a building) would give importance to the strength of the building, while the Interior Decorator would only give prominence to the beauty and aesthetics of the building. In a similar manner, 'Prana' would seek things that give strength to the body. But, senses seek objects that give pleasure to the body.

We are in the stage of having to select one of the two types, between food that is tasty and food that gives good health to the body. Each time we consume food there is verily a war within us in the matter of having to select one of these two types of food.

'Disciplining of the tongue' means avoiding food that just gives pleasure and instead taking food that gives good health to the body. Taking health-giving food does not imply taking tasteless food. There is taste also in food that gives good health to the body. We should practice to cultivate our taste for such food.

Gross Body

Our gross body is called 'Bhoga Ayatanam' - the station for the experience of happiness and unhappiness ('sukha' and 'dukha'). Only when this body is healthy and free from disease, could we lead a normal life.

Health is the wealth among wealth

Strength of the body is attained through 'Ahara' (food) and 'Asana' (physical exercise). Only through proper food and proper physical exercises, could we keep our body fit and strong.

We should have good health at three levels:

1. Physical health (of the gross body),
2. Emotional health (of the mind),

3. Intellectual health (of 'buddhi'/ intellect)

Health of the body is not just being without disease. A body that has sufficient strength for proper daily life is indeed a health body. When we wear shoes of the correct size on our feet, as they do not pinch or hurt us, we altogether forget their very presence. So also, only a body that is properly functioning, to the extent that we are unaware of its presence, is a healthy body.

Healthy mind is one with mental strength. It is to be with emotional independence. It is the ability, to be without being dependence on others' approval, facing worldly experiences on one's own, and not to yearn for any one or anything.

Only if the body is healthy, would the mind have strength and fitness. In a healthy mind, there would be courage and love, and jealousy and anger would not be present. The reason why we get angry many times is because our body lacks strength. A weak body weakens the mind as well.

Intellectual health is to have the power to make right judgment. Only a healthy intellect could think properly and come to the right decision.

Health of the mind and health of the intellect are dependent on the health of the physical body. In general, only when we have good physical health, we are able to be with mental strength. When we are afflicted by disease, when we are in a state of physical dependence on others, the state of losing our mental

strength and living a life of mental dependence on others results. Moreover, as in such a stage both the mind and the intellect devote more attention to the physical well being, they get tired and lose their ability to function properly.

Therefore, having a fit and healthy physical body is a very important basic necessity. Realising this, we should practice discipline in our food.

The food that we consume should be subject to three rules: 1. Hitam, 2. Mitam, 3. Methyam

1. 'Hitam' means that which is good. Here, the word 'good' implies consuming food that has life force and that gives the necessary energy to the body. All the different types of nutrients that are necessary should be given.

2. 'Mitam' refers to taking food in right measure or quantity. When more food than necessary is given to the body, such food itself becomes the cause for diseases. Solid food should be consumed only to the extent of half of our stomach's volume. If a further quarter portion is filled with water, and the balance quarter portion of air space is left, food would be digested well and give energy to the body.

In this world, if 5 percent of the people are suffering from hunger and lack of food, the rest 95 percent of the people are suffering from diseases due to overeating. Even energy-rich food should only be given within limits to the body.

3. 'Methyam' means pure food. The food that we consume should have been cooked on the same day. It should not be impure and should not be food that was cooked several days earlier. Further, when food is made as an offering ('Arpanam' or 'Naivedyam') at first to Iswara and then taken, such food gets sanctified according to 'Sastra'.

When these three rules are followed and food is consumed, we get good health for our body.

On account of several reasons, we lose discipline in our food. Let us see some examples.

1. **Taste :** The first reason for us to lose our discipline in food is 'Taste'. The taste that is in the food is the chief reason for us to consume more quantity than required, and for taking food types that are not necessary for the body. For example, many people do not take sufficient quantity of vegetables. Instead, they take fried foods such as 'Vada'(Tamil), more than necessary.

2. **Depression :** Most often, the state of our mind, influences the quality and the quantity of food that we take. When one faces a situation of having to be alone, the mind, in order to escape from the burden of loneliness, uses food as an instrument for relief. When feelings such as loneliness, mental burden, rejection, and sorrow are experienced, our mind attempts to divert its state, through food. In order to escape from itself, mind engages the body to consume food even when food is not required. Thereby, the mental burden gets accumulated in the stomach!

3. Habit : For many, eating food is an action that is done without a sense of awareness. They do not give a thought for, either the quality or the nature of the food that they should take, or its quantity. Many have made it their habit to eat much more food than what is necessary. Many do not have the awareness that one should take food in right quantity, and that energy giving food should be selected as per plan, and consumed. Habit is one of the reasons for lack of discipline in food.

Many people think that over feeding the guests is the hallmark of good hospitality. And, the guests too think that if they do not accept and consume such excessive food that is offered, it would tantamount to disrespecting the host. Many times, mothers think that they are expressing their love and affection for the children, by giving excessive food and tasty food. Such erroneous practices also lead to indiscipline in food.

4. Obstruction to sensory pleasures : It is through the five senses that the mind derives the experience of pleasure. If an obstruction arises to the pleasure that was being experienced through the senses such as eye, ears, etc., the mind attempts to compensate for such lost pleasure through the mouth (the tongue). This is why, in old age, when there is no opportunity for deriving pleasure through the other senses, one tends to eat more food than required, and thereby attempting to experience pleasure. At an age when they should be consuming less food, they take more food than required and consequently suffer.

Due to many such reasons, we are without discipline in our food.

Techniques for discipline in food

1. Health Awareness : Most people do not realise the importance of physical health. Even before losing one's health, it is important that one becomes aware of the importance of health, intellectually.

> **To gain wealth at the cost of health is bad trade.**

Even while we are healthy to some extent, we should protect our physical health with care. If we pay the price of 'losing health for acquiring wealth', later in our life, we would have to 'expend the wealth so acquired for recovering the good health that was lost'. Instead, we should realise the importance of good health, even while we are healthy. We should feel the responsibility that our body should be kept in good health. In order to be disciplined in our food, we should give our attention to our health.

2. Fasting : Fasting (being without food) one day in a week is a superior 'Tapas'(austerity). Our goal is to consume food in the right quantity. We cannot attain that goal right in the beginning. Discipline of our tongue, the practice of eating in moderation, and the strength to bear hunger, are some of the benefits that we get from fasting ('Vratam'). When we avoid the food to which we have become a slave, on our own volition, such a practice becomes the best 'Sadhana'

(spiritual exercise).

Practicing to fast and being hungry would appear to be most difficult, in the beginning. But, as time passes, the mind would experience and enjoy a certain pleasure in being hungry. While being hungry, the mind would perceive certain deep calmness. At that time, it would start to think. Only when it is hungry, does the snake act with great strength. This fact applies to our mind as well. Fasting is the greatest 'Tapas' (austerity) among all 'Tapas' (austerities). If we learn to make it a habit to taste and enjoy that 'Tapas', discipline in our food would easily be achieved by us.

Just as we give rest period to all the instruments that we use, occasionally through 'Vratam'(fasting), we should give rest for our digestive system. In this manner, 'Vratam' results in good health for our body and mind.

3. Exercise : While we are engaged in physical exercise, we would seek healthy and energy giving food only. If we consume too much food, we would not be able to do physical exercise. If we don't engage ourselves in physical exercises, we cannot pursue discipline in our food. When we continue physical exercises, without our being aware, food discipline would also be attained. In this manner, exercise helps one acquire discipline in food.

4. Mental Health : Only when we keep the mind in a good state, we could attain discipline in our food habits. Only when the mind is without responsibilities

and has nothing to do, it seeks happiness through food. If we create good ways to keep the mind happy, then the mind would not go after food. For example, when we are enjoying our favourite music, our mind does not seek food.

Thus, by understanding the importance of the discipline in food and by practicing that discipline, we can attain strengths in all conditions.

7

DEVOTION ('BHAKTI')

When the feeling of love is expressed towards a higher entity, such love is called 'Bhakti' or 'Devotion'. The love expressed to the 'Guru' (teacher) is called 'Guru Bhakti', and our expression of love to the place of birth is called 'Desa Bhakti'.

Definition of Devotion

The expression of love to and faith in God is called 'Bhakti' or devotion.

Though we might not have the full knowledge of 'Who God is', on the basis of our faith in the words of wise men that 'there exists a God-principle, which is Omnipotent and Omniscient, and which has created this world', we could express our love and devotion to God.

Love is the mother of all emotions.

In our minds, we do experience the presence of the feeling of love. That one feeling of love itself transforms into different types of feelings. Just as gold transforms into many ornaments, so too, love transforms in many ways.

When love is expressed to one's relations, it is termed affection, and when it is expressed towards objects, it is called attachment. The same feeling of love becomes the prime cause for actions such as sacrifice ('Tyaga'), forgiveness, and charity ('Danam').

Just as when a little quantity of poison contaminates it, the total quantity of food becomes poisonous, so also, when mental confusion or delusion contaminates, our feeling of love transforms as evil or negative feelings. When the object of our love goes away to another person, our feeling of love transforms to jealousy; when someone obstructs us from the desired object, the feeling of love transforms to anger and fear.

Depending on the place where it rains, the rain water could become either the holy Ganges-water or the dirty sewer-water. When love is purified by knowledge, it becomes devotion and other good and positive feelings. When love gets associated with delusion, it transforms to such negative feelings as attachment, fear, and jealousy.

When the spiritual texts advise, "Become free from attachment", their intent is not for one 'to avoid love'. The intent is that we should reform our love into superior emotions such as devotion, and kindness. This is the reason why, at times, we use the adjective 'pure' to the word 'love'. 'Pure love' is a feeling which is untainted by greed, delusion, selfishness, etc., and results in betterment of us and others.

Purified Love is Devotion

Expression of Devotion

Pure love manifests always as sacrifice ('Tyaga').

Without love we can give,

without giving we cannot love.

The love expressed to God will manifest in the desire to give something to God, or in desiring to do something for Him. Love manifests as an act of sacrifice. Thus, the word 'Bhakti' or devotion means the feeling of love towards God, and the subsequent manifestation as action. Worship of God, 'Japa' (repetition God's name), the austerity ('Tapas') undertaken by us for the sake of God, are all 'Bhakti'.

Devotees

Devotion does not sprout easily in the mind. To develop love to a superior entity, our mind also needs to be superior. The love towards God can be cultivated, only stage by stage. Thereby, we can also classify the devotees who love God, as being in several stages.

In Bhagawad Gita, Bhagawan Sri Krishna

classifies the devotees as of four categories, as

1. 'Aarta' ,

2. 'Arthaarthee',

3. 'Jijnaasu', and

4. 'Jnani'

1. 'Aarta' is one who remembers God only in times of sorrow. At other times, he does not think of God. He is in the first stage or category. As he has the faith that God will help to remove his sorrow, and as he seeks God at least in times of crisis, such a person is accepted to be a devotee.

2. 'Arthaarthee' is one who prays to God for worldly objects and wealth. Even while he is free from sorrow, and is flooded by wealth, he is devoted to God. He has the faith that God's grace is essential for acquiring wealth and success, and for experiencing worldly pleasures. Such a devotee is in the second step.

The majority of the people in the world are in these two, initial steps.

3.'Jijnaasu' is one who has entered the spiritual path. Having his goal as attaining God or 'Truth' alone, he has commenced the spiritual practices ('Sadhanas') for purifying his mind, and for acquiring the knowledge about God. His devotion is termed 'Nishkama bhakti'

(or 'devotion without worldly desire'). Among the devotees, he is at a higher level.

This devotee is said to be a 'Karma Yogi', when he expresses his devotion through his actions; he is said to be a 'Upasaka' when he expresses his devotion through mental actions such as 'Dhyana' (meditation).

4. 'Jnani' is one who has acquired the knowledge about the nature of God. He too expresses his love towards God. His love is full (infinite). It is not divided. In Bhagawad Gita, Bhagawan Sri Krishna states the unity between Himself and the 'Jnani' ["I am that 'Jnani'" and "that 'Jnani' is Me"]. The devotion that the 'Jnani' has attained is the goal that is to be attained by the 'Sadhakas' (spiritual seekers).

In this manner, devotees are categorised under several stages. Indeed, it is only the devotion of the 'Jijnaasu' (spiritual seeker) who is in the third stage, which can really be termed 'Bhakti' (devotion). For, those who are in the first two stages utilise God as but an instrument to fulfill own desires.

Methods to cultivate devotion

It is acceptable and alright that in the early stages, one approaches God and expresses devotion in a somewhat business-like or barter-like manner, "I

will do this for you, and You give me that in return". But, devotion must develop further and mature to the extent that one is able to sacrifice everything at the mental level, for the sake of God. We will now see how we could cultivate our devotion to God.

1.Knowledge of God : As we acquire more and more knowledge about God, the quality and the quantum of our 'Bhakti' (devotion) would improve. The feeling that we have towards a person depends on the extent to which we have understood him. So also, if we understand the answers to the questions such as,

> **'Who is God?',**
> **'What is the relationship between the world and God?', and**
> **'What is the relationship between us and God?',**

then our 'Bhakti' (devotion) would develop to the extent that we have understood God.

> **Devotion to God would develop our knowledge of God.**
>
> **Knowledge of God would develop our devotion to God.**

Love and knowledge are capable of mutually developing one another.

2. Dispassion ('Vairagya'): If we were to get intoxicated by the worldly objects and convert our love to attachment to the world, how could we love God!

Understanding the transient nature of the world, and knowing that no worldly object can satiate our mind fully, removing our attachment to the world, we should express devotion upon God. 'Vairagya' (dispassion) means giving up attachment to the worldly objects that give us happiness. It does not imply hatred to worldly objects.

3. 'Bhakta Sanga' (Company of other devotees) : Companionship with other devotees supports to develop one's own 'Bhakti' (devotion). When people with the same goal get associated, they would encourage one another and would progress. That is why it is said, 'to capture God, catch the devotee'.

4. 'Tapas' (Austerity) : All the austerities are done by us only for the sake of purifying our love. If we engage ourselves in 'Vrata' (austerities), 'Paada Yaatra' (pilgrimage by the foot), 'Japa' (repetition of God's name), and 'Puja' (Worship), the quality of our 'Bhakti' (devotion) will improve.

Valuable things are not valued because valuable mind is indeed rare.

What we love depends on the quality of our

mind. 'Tapas' (austerities) are undertaken for the sake of elevating the quality of our mind.

Benefits of 'Bhakti' (Devotion)

Expressing our devotion to God is giving our love to Him. This is a kind of emotional investment. We will see the benefits of such an investment.

1. 'Manobalam' (Mental strength) : In the course of life, one faces many testing situations, obstacles, defeats and losses. At such times, if the devotee gets the feeling that God is there as one's companion, he would have the mental strength necessary to face all such adversities. When many people develop the feeling of mental strength in the presence of wealth and relations, which are indeed useless at times of crisis, why would not one get the feeling of strength from the thought that 'God is my companion'!

2. Emotional Growth : 'Bhakti' (Devotion) refines the emotional aspect of the mind. It heals a mind that is emotionally hurt. For the mind to cultivate higher values such as kindness, forgiveness, loftiness, and sacrifice, and to attain maturity, such a mind should have received love. The mind must have had good relationships with mother, father, brothers and sisters, wife, relations, friends, etc. Only one, who had experienced love, could give love. Only one, who had been forgiven, knows to forgive. Mind expands only through relationships. But for many people, certain important relationships might not have been in the right

manner. Or, their mind might have been hurt by those relationships. Such mental hurt would not heal easily.

A person might not have received motherly affection. His father, instead of giving affection, might have exhibited only anger, in the name and intention of discipline. Or he might have been deceived by his friends and relations. Such emotional hurt, gets healed by 'Bhakti' (devotion).

Whatever be the deficiency in any type of relationship, such deficiency would be filled and compensated by 'Bhakti' (devotion). Devotees take God to be their mother, father, friend, and some times as a child, and derive the love that they have missed in those relationships. The reason for Bhagawan Sri Krishna to be described in Srimad Bhagawatham in the forms of the Guru (teacher), friend, or as a child, is to help us to visualise Him in manner that we might need, and to help us compensate for the love that we might have missed.

We notice that elderly people behave child-like themselves, while interacting with children. In the same manner, the devotee losing up his individuality to God, heals his emotional hurt, unawares.

The reason for giving God different types of names, forms, decorations, qualities, etc., is only to facilitate our mental growth. The relationship between God and the devotee is inseparable and infallible. And

through this relationship, one could heal mental hurt caused by other relationships.

Thereby, the mind which has become hardened due to mental hurts transforms to be a soft mind, through 'Bhakti' (devotion).

3. 'Dharma Achara Karanam' (Motivation for Righteous Life) : 'Bhakti' (Devotion) becomes the reason for living as per 'Dharma'; 'Achara' means 'living in accordance with'. 'Bhakti' becomes the reason to live in accordance with 'Dharma' (righteous life). 'Dharma' is the law or 'Code of conduct' that God has given for our life in this world. Following 'Dharma' is indeed our compliance with His command. We listen, without let, to the words of those upon whom we have great respect and love. And, we will follow the words of those whom we love, without giving room for any of our own likes and dislikes.

We will also have the concern and fear in our mind, that we 'should not lose the person to whom we have great love'. Having the fear that, if we do not listen to His words, we would lose God's love, or due to the fear that He will punish us, we would live as per 'Dharma'. And, we would avoid 'Adharma' (unrighteous conduct). If the fear of God helps us to avoid 'Adharma' (unrighteous life), such fear is indeed beneficial.

Thus, our devotion (love) to God becomes the reason for our following 'Dharma' (Righteous life) that has been formulated and given by Him, and for avoiding 'Adharma' (Unrighteous conduct).

4. 'Tyaga moolam' (Root cause for Renunciation) : 'Bhakti' (devotion) is the root cause for the renunciation. Indeed, the very scale of measure for love is sacrifice. The extent of our sacrifice that we do would show the degree of our affection. In order to attain the ultimate human goal of 'Moksha' (liberation), one has to renounce everything, at the mental level. 'Bhakti' (devotion) is the very reason for such a renunciation. Devotion to God becomes the reason not only for renouncing the impermanent world, but also for realising God.

5. Start to finish : For us, who are continuing the journey in the spiritual path, it is 'Bhakti' (devotion) that makes us continue the journey, right from the first step till we reach the goal. 'Bhakti' (devotion) shines as the prime reason, for commencing 'Sadhanas' (spiritual disciplines); for removing the obstacles that arise while we are practicing such 'Sadhanas'; for acquiring virtues, and for giving up evil qualities.

The real secret is that, for all the glory that we had achieved in our life, our pure love ('Bhakti') to God is the basic reason.

8

BALANCE / EQUANIMITY ('SAMATWAM')

समत्वं योग उच्यते

‘Samatvam Yoga uchchyate’

Equanimity is called Yoga.

Indeed, the very goal that we have to attain in life is ‘Equanimity’ (‘Samatwam’). When we attain ‘Equanimity’ in all aspects of our life, we have indeed attained the state of ‘Completeness’ (‘Poornatwam’). This is the reason that in many places in Bhagawad Gita, from various angles Bhagawan Sri Krishna had talked about ‘Samatwam’ (‘Equanimity’). The mental maturity and development that we have attained depends on the extent to which our life has reached this balanced state.

The one virtue called ‘Samatwam’ (Equanimity) has a broad and profound meaning. This word ‘Samatwam’ has several meanings such as, ‘a uniform’, ‘right measured’, ‘impartial’, ‘equivalent’, 'balance', 'moderation', and ‘non-differentiating’. Understanding the true meaning of this value in itself is

somewhat difficult. Upon understanding its meaning, maintaining 'Samatwam' (state of balance) in all aspects is even more difficult. We have to acquire this value with patience. All the aspects of our life have to reach the state of equanimity ('Samatwam'). We will briefly study the occasions in which we have to attain 'Samatwam'.

Moderation in Activities

We should observe moderation in all the activities that we undertake daily. For any activity, we should devote just the right amounts of attention and effort that are required, and not either in excess or in deficit. The daily activities that we engage in, such as food, sleep, work, rest, physical exercise, sports, studies, and entertainment, should only to be the extent necessary. For example, we should not sleep either more than necessary or less than necessary. So also, all activities such as taking rest, working, and exercising, instead of being either in excess or in shortfall, should be of the right magnitude. Our mind is not a machine. The mind also requires activities that give it entertainment. Even in this, moderation is necessary. We see that the lives of some people are nothing but work, while some others live lives without any kind of work. Instead of this, both work and rest should be disciplined. So also, interaction with people such as relations and friends should be in right measure. In short, starting from the moment we wake up and brush our teeth till the time we go to sleep, all our activities should be of the right measure. When we slip from

moderation even in one instance, our entire life gets affected. When our sleep is disturbed from the right measure, throughout that day, we would see that our schedule becomes disorderly. Therefore, we should maintain the state of balance in all of our daily activities.

Balance in Austerity ('Sadhana')

Even in the different types of 'Tapas'(austerity) that we undertake a state of balance is necessary. We might undertake different types of 'Sadhanas'; discipline is essential in them.

Disciplining the discipline is balancing.

Imagining that, they are following good values and good conduct, in ignorance, many slip from the moderate state many times. Food discipline is a very important discipline. In the name of food discipline, some people undertake 'Vratam' (fasting) and develop diseases such as stomach ulcer. In such instances, a discipline is required in the discipline that we intend to follow.

When Siddhartha (Buddha) left the palace and commenced an austere life, initially he avoided food entirely, and his body became very weak. He could not to do any other 'Tapas' (austerity), or pursue contemplation on the 'Truth'. At that time, the song of a cowherd gave him the knowledge of 'Samatwam'

(the state of balance). The substance of that song was – "When the strings of a 'Veena' are either too taught or too slack, music would not emanate from that musical instrument". Thus, the very first lesson that Buddha learnt was 'Samatwam' (balance).

Anything insufficient or in excess

will not give the desired result.

Realising this proverb, we should maintain discipline in all the 'Sadhanas'(spiritual practices) that we do. It is very important to know – 'when to start a Sadhana', 'how to perform it', and 'when it should be given up'.

Equal Vision ('Sama-Darsanam')

पण्डिताः समदर्शिनः

The Wise have Equal Vision towards all living beings.

These are the golden words of Bhagawan in the Gita. This concept is most subtle. Therefore, we should understand it carefully.

The 'Sastram', that exhorts that all kinds of people (and living beings) should be regarded with

'Equal Vision' ('Sama-Darsanam'), also advises that we should keep away from evil persons.

Our dilemma is, "Which of these two, should we follow? "

We should understand correctly both these 'Upadesams' (advices) and should adopt the appropriate advice in the appropriate occasion.

When seen from an aero plane, both the tall coconut tree and the tiny grass appear the same and are indistinguishable. But, when seen from the ground level, the coconut tree stands out tall. In the same manner, when our mind sees from a higher and broader state, we have 'Equal vision', and from a narrow-minded state, the differences are seen. We differentiate people on the basis of factors such as caste, religion, and language. When the mind becomes broad based, and when we acquire the knowledge of God, our vision attains the state of balance. 'Sastram' calls the 'Eternal, non-deteriorating entity' that exists in the 'Transient and decaying body' as 'Atma'. When we see the world from the stand point of 'Atma', the world gets a new state. When seen from the stand point of the Eternal entity ('Atma') that is propelling every one, differences such as good people and evil people do not stand out. Decaying body, changing mind, and changing character ('Guna'), do all have the 'Eternal and non-decaying Atma' as the base. When seen with the

knowledge of that 'Eternal entity', every one becomes equal. But, if seen on the basis of the body, mind, or character, people differ from one another entirely. These two view points, namely, 'regarding every one as equal from a higher stand point of view', and 'differentiating them on the basis of human character', are not mutually conflicting. Regarding all as equal ('Sama-Darsanam') does not imply that we should treat and interact with them in the same manner. A mother regards her two year old child, and her eight year old child, as equal. All the same, she would not give the quantum of food that she gives to the eight year old child to the two year old child. Though both are regarded (considered) as equal, each one has to be treated and handled in the manner that is appropriate to them only. On the basis that they are her children, the mother has 'Equal vision' to both of her children. But, on the basis of difference that is in the ages of the children, she treats the children suitably.

So also, though the 'Jnani' (Sage) has 'Sama-Darsanam' (Equal vision) to all on the basis of 'Self Knowledge' ('Tatwa Jnanam'), on the basis of the individual's character('Guna'), he will interact with each and behave as appropriate.

Equality is not in regarding different things similarly, but in regarding different things differently, as appropriate.

Different golden ornaments are 'equal' on the basis of the raw material, gold. But, on the basis of ornamentation (form and shape) and function, they are different. A jewel that is to be worn on the feet (anklet) is not worn on the nose. Thus, understanding the basis for 'Equal vision' ('Sama-Darsanam'), one has to handle each person (living being) only in the manner that is appropriate to that person (living being).

If one acquires the mental maturity to regard all as equal, one would not develop feelings such as attachment, hatred, jealousy, and anger, in the inner mind.

Instead of considering the differences among people on the basis of their birth (caste), language, wealth, education, etc., to regard them with 'Equal vision' on the basis that all are human like us, is a superior virtue. Prior to our attaining 'Self knowledge', on the basis that "All belong to human race", all should be considered equal. Realising in the depth of the mind that 'all are equal', one should behave with each individual only in the manner that is appropriate to that person. While we act with 'Equal vision' ('Sama-Darsanam'), we would not function in violation of 'Dharma' (Right conduct).

'Samachittam' (Considering experiences as equal)

'Samachittam' is to consider as equal, the varying experiences (pairs of opposites or dualities)

that we come across in our life, such as ‘pleasure-pain’ (happiness- unhappiness), ‘cold – heat’, ‘fame – infamy’, ‘success –failure’, and ‘gain – loss’.

We come across many types of experiences, in our life. All of these experiences are varied, unique, and of different types. No two experiences are of the same kind. But, in the mind that considers these experiences, we could have a state of balance. Consideration in the mind, of a pleasurable experience and a painful experience as equal, is a very superior virtue. At the body level, experiences such as heat and cold would not be the same. Yet in one’s mind, they could be accepted equally. Our mental maturity is commensurate with the extent to which we are able to accept equally the different types of experiences.

Jumping and exhilaration in times of happiness, and depression and agony in times of sorrow, is how human life is. It has become human nature to become arrogant upon attaining such things as profit (gain), success, fame and wealth; and to get inferiority complex (depression) upon facing loss, failure and infamy. External conditions are often deciding the state of the human mind. Instead of this, in all types of dualities, having a uniform and proper state of mind is a virtue that is essential for man.

Such a state of mind, which considers dualities as equal, could be acquired only through the right knowledge. Both the happy situation and the sorrowful situation do not continue to be so, for ever. When we realise this truth, we would be in a position to accept all

the experiences that we come across as equal.

To follow the state of equanimity ('Samatwam') in all situations, 'Sadhanas' such as right knowledge, patience, and long-time practice are required. Mind, that has acquired 'Equanimity' (state of balance) to some extent, becomes a very useful instrument. Such a mind utilises this world quite well. Moreover, it becomes eligible to get knowledge about God. Thereby, in order to enjoy this world well, and to attain the ultimate human goal of 'Moksha', mind must attain 'Equanimity' (state of balance). That is why, Bhagawan stated, "Samatwam (Equanimity) is Yoga". The implication is that we should attain the Yoga of 'Samatwam' (Equanimity/ state of balance). Attaining 'Yoga' is not acquiring some kind of supernatural power. It is not a power like alchemy (to convert base iron to expensive gold). 'Yoga' is the attainment of 'Equanimity' in the mind. When our mind attains this state of balance fully, at that time, our mind has attained the state of fullness ('Poornatwam').

9

CONCLUSION

It is refining of the mind that we refer to as spiritual practice. Cultivation of good values in our mind and the removal of bad qualities from the mind are part of the refinement of the mind. After acquiring all types of prosperity such as wealth, relations, and so on, we have only to live with our own mind. Living with a refined and pure mind is indeed a life of prosperity and fulfillment.

Only a few virtues are discussed in this book, as a sample. When we desire to acquire a certain virtue, we should first realize the value of that value, and thereupon take the appropriate effort to attain that value. Initially the pace of our progress could be slow, somewhat like the proverbial tortoise, but the progress would continue to be steady.

It is the truth experienced by people on spiritual journey that 'consistent effort that is pursued with the twin supports of patience and faith would indeed yield great results'.

With the blessing that you too may realize this truth, this book is being concluded.

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Om Tat Sat